

Richard A. Keller, III papers, 1957-2011

Overview of the Collection

Creator Keller, Richard A., III

Title Richard A. Keller, III papers

Dates 1957-2011 (inclusive)

Quantity 3 linear feet, (3 boxes)

Collection Number ACCN 2708

Summary The Richard A. Keller, III papers (1957-2011) consist of articles, brochures, and news clippings regarding Keller's development of rocket-powered cars. The collection contains materials regarding speed racing and various vehicles developed by Keller such as The Blue Flame, X-1, Pollution Packer, and others. Keller helped to form the company Reaction Dynamics.

Repository [University of Utah Libraries, Special Collections](#)
Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library
University of Utah
295 South 1500 East
Salt Lake City, UT
84112-0860

Telephone: 8015818863
special@library.utah.edu

Access Restrictions Twenty-four hour advanced notice encouraged. Materials must be used on-site. Access to parts of this collection may be restricted under provisions of state or federal law.

Languages English

Biographical Note

As a founding member of the Igniters Auto Club of Chicago in 1951, Keller, along with his eighth grade classmates, had a passion for hotrodding. Both drag racing and the fantastic speeds at the Bonneville Salt Flats filled his youthful dreams of building and racing fast cars in the 1950s. Inspired by working with "Big Daddy" Don Garlits, Keller briefly raced at the drag strips in his Cadillac-powered 1939 Ford. NASA-sponsored contract research projects at the IIT Research Institute brought him to the Marshall Space Flight Center at Huntsville, Alabama where he worked on rocket propellant monitoring hardware for the Saturn I and Saturn V booster test programs. Later, working in research at the Institute of Gas Technology on catalysis in natural gas combustion led to gas industry sponsorship of The Blue Flame land speed record vehicle.

As a partner in Reaction Dynamics, he helped to design and build the X-1 rocket-powered dragster, the prototype of the Bonneville streamliner, and the Blue Flame. The Blue Flame was their first attempt to run on the Bonneville Salt Flats in 1970. Their successful initial land speed venture resulted in Gary Gabelich setting the world land speed record, 630.388 miles per hour (1,014.656 kilometers per hour) over the kilometer distance with a flying start. It was also the first world land speed record over 1,000 kilometers per hour. This record was not broken until 1997. The following year (1971) he designed and built the Honda Hawk motorcycle streamliner, ridden by Jon McKibben to 286.556 miles per hour over one mile distance. This was not backed up by a return run, however.

In 1972, Keller was the rocket engineer for the Pollution Packer dragster at Bonneville. Dave Anderson set numerous world acceleration records over the ¼-mile, 500 meters, and the standing start kilometer at 234.775 miles per hour, the average speed over the distance. Back at the Salt Flats in 1974, he designed and built the Pollution Packer Bonneville Dragster, driven by Vern Anderson to new world acceleration records in the 1/4-mile and 500 meters. The latter distance average speed was 203.506 mile per hour. This was, again, a rocket-powered vehicle with a unique monocoque chassis structure.

Following these projects, he has designed and built the rocket propulsion systems and chassis for several rocket-powered dragsters; Lew Arrington's "Captain America", John Luna's "Moonshot", and Sammy Miller's "Vanishing Point" to name a few. These rocket-powered "exhibition" cars were very fast and popular attractions at drags strips across the country for several years. At the same time he has continued on with a successful engineering career in the medical device industry from the 1980s until now.

(This biography was provided by Richard A. Keller, III.)

Content Description

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Use of the Collection

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Preferred Citation

Collection Name, Collection Number, Box Number, Folder Number. Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, The University of Utah.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated by Richard A. Keller, III in 2012.

Processing Note

Processed by Betsey Welland in 2012.

Separated Materials

Photographs (P1801) and audio-visual (A0019) materials were transferred to the Multimedia Division of Special Collections.

Detailed Description of the Collection

General Materials

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
1	1	<i>The Blue Flame History</i> This folder consists of 9 CDs and a USB flash drive that contain a compilation of publications and photographs regarding the history of the Blue Flame by Richard A. Keller. Also included is a complete index and certificate of registration with the United States Copyright Office.	2009
1	2	<i>Space Age Speedster</i> This folder consists of 16 CDs and a USB flash drive that contain a compilation of publications and photographs regarding the history of Space Age Speedster by Richard A. Keller. Also included is a complete index and certificate of registration with the United States Copyright Office.	2010
1	3	R. Dausman and R. Keller, "Development of a Land Speed Record Vehicle of Mach One Capabilities"	
1	4	"Proposal to Establish a New World Land Speed Record Using LNG as Fuel"	1968
1	5	LSR correspondence	1967- 1968
1	6	LSR monthly reports	1968- 1969
1	7	Listing of vehicles designed and built by Dick Keller and record attempts	1970- 1974
1	8	Listing of "Fastest wheel driven cars in history, different by design but same results"	2009

Subject Files

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
2	1	American Timing Activities Association (ATAA) article	1959
2	2	Art Arfon's "Green Monster" brochure and article	1957; 1964
2	3-5	<i>The Blue Flame</i> articles and general materials	1965-2011
2	6	Budweiser rocket car articles	1980
2	7	Gary Gabelich materials	1967-2012
2	8	<i>Honda Hawk</i> advertisement	1972
2	9	<i>Pollution Packer</i> rocket dragster articles and brochures	1972-1975
2	10	<i>Spirit of America</i> article and brochures	1965; 1968
2	11	<i>Thrust SSC</i> articles	1997
2	12	X-1 and hydrogen peroxide rocket-powered cars articles	1965-1977

Oversize materials

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
3	1	X-1 news clippings	1965; 1968
3	2	<i>The Blue Flame</i> posters	
3	3	<i>The Blue Flame</i> articles	1969-1970
3	4-5	<i>The Blue Flame</i> news clippings	1970-1971; 1983

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms

- [Automobiles, Racing--Speed](#)
- [Rocket engines](#)

Personal Names

- [Keller, Richard A., III--Archives](#)

Form or Genre Terms

- [Articles](#)
- [Brochures](#)
- [Clippings](#)

Finding aid created by Betsey Welland
2012 (last modified: 2019)



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