



SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Paul E. Pihl Papers (1929-1981)
SCHS #0598.00

Description: 0.25 linear ft. (1 box)

Biographical/Historical note: Paul Edward Pihl (1898-1991), pronounced “Peal”, was born on July 19, 1898 in Paxton, Illinois, the son of Swedish immigrants Gustave E. Pihl (1868-1959) and Lydia Johnson Pihl (1870-1905). After a brief stint at Yale, where he helped to organize a naval reserve unit, he accepted an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis and graduated in 1920. In the same year he arrived in Charleston for the first time by virtue of his appointment to a destroyer tender. Pihl subsequently furthered his education at both Annapolis and MIT, where he graduated in 1924 with a degree in aeronautical engineering. This led to a posting in an aircraft factory, and for over a decade Pihl managed production of sea- and landplanes for the Navy, introducing a number of technical and managerial improvements in the process. He also earned his pilot’s license and undertook a number of high-profile flying assignments. Perhaps his most prominent role came in 1938, where he was posted as assistant naval attaché to the United States embassy in Berlin at a time when international tensions were on the rise. From then until 1941, when he returned to the U.S., he met a number of prominent figures, including Charles Lindbergh and Hermann Goering. His exploits in Germany later went on to inspire the character Pug Henry in Herman Wouk’s 1971 novel The Winds of War. In 1942, he conducted a round-the-world tour with former Republican presidential candidate Wendell Wilkie, visiting the Kremlin and meeting Josef Stalin in the process. Pihl was promoted to Rear Admiral and served during the remainder of World War II as head of naval air production. He retired from active duty in 1953. In 1967, Pihl returned to Charleston, residing there until his death. He was married twice, once in 1920 to Charlotte E. Wilkie Pihl (1899-1979), the sister of Wendell Wilkie, and again in 1980 to Dorothy Gretchen Van Ness Gufler Pihl (1905-1985). He had no children.

Scope and Content: Collection consists of journals, flight log books, and two folders. Four bound journals for 1938, 1939, 1940, and 1941 cover the period between 1/3/1938 and 5/5/1941, including the time spent in Berlin; the last three are of German origin. In addition to these, two unidentified notepads, both missing some sheets, appear to contain journal entries from late 1941 or later. The two flight log books cover the periods 1935-38 and 1950-53 respectively. They include the type of aircraft flown, any passengers, time elapsed, and other notes. There are also a

number of loose items removed from the first flight log book, mostly loose record sheets and navy documents relating to recordkeeping as well as official correspondence relating to Pihl's flying certification. Finally, a small cache of correspondence refers mainly to a 1939 account of Pihl's initial impressions of Germany.

Preferred Citation: Pihl, Paul E. (1898-1991). Paul E. Pihl papers, 1929-1981. (598.00) South Carolina Historical Society.

Search Terms:

Göring, Hermann, 1893-1946.

Lindbergh, Charles A. (Charles Augustus), 1902-1974.

Pihl, Paul Edward, 1898-1991.

Admirals -- United States.

Logbooks -- United States -- 20th century.

Military attachés.

Naval aviation -- Technological innovations.

Naval aviation -- United States -- History -- 20th century.

Germany -- Description and travel.

BOX 1

Folder 1: Correspondence, 1939-1981

- 1 Letter, August 14, 1981, to P. E. Pihl from Rear Admiral James R. Dudley, a former Annapolis classmate of Pihl, explaining that an archived original letter dated 9 January 1939 is attached. Envelope included.
- 2 Letter, January 10, 1939, to Lt. Comdr. T. R. Wirth, U.S.N., from P. E. Pihl, announcing that he is sending out a "round-robin" containing impressions of his arrival in Germany.
- 3 Copy of letter 2.
- 4 Handwritten note, (1939?) from someone other than Pihl (Perhaps T. R. Wirth), stating that the ONI would not allow for the official publication of the "round-robin" but that it is being circulated anyway among a select group. Likely included with 5.
- 5 Typewritten letter, January 9, 1939, to an apparently general audience, from P. E. Pihl, Berlin, Germany, detailing his experiences in Germany, including arrival in Hamburg and meetings with Goering and Lindbergh.

Folder 2: Flight Log Books, 1935-1938 & 1950-1953

- 1 Aviators Flight Log Book, N. AER. 4111, labeled "Pihl, P. E.; LIEUT (C.C.); U.S.N" Covers period from April 1, 1935 to April 12, 1938.
- 2 Aviators Flight Log Book, NAVAER-4111 (Rev. 9-44), labeled "RADM P. E. Pihl; U.S. Navy" Covers period from July 1950 to March 1953.

Folder 3: Items removed from first flight log book, 1929-1938

- 1 Letter, August 13, 1931, to all aviation units from Chief of Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department announcing updated regulations for classification of flight purpose as required by flight log books.
- 2 Note, November 1937, apparently written by Pihl on a blank memorandum (from the Office of Commander Aircraft, Scouting Force, U.S.S. Wright) to record flight log entries from 10/26-11/5.
- 3 Note, April 12, 1938, apparently written by Pihl on a blank sheet of paper to record a flight log entry for 4/12/38.
- 4 Flight certificate and schedule form, June 30, 1936, certifying Pihl's flying hours for the month of June, 1936.
- 5 Naval aviator endorsement form, August 7, 1929, certifying Pihl to be a naval aviator. Includes official correspondence dated August 2, 1929, to P. E. Pihl from the Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department.

Folder 4: Journals (2), 1938-1939

- 1 1938 diary and calendar published by The Standard Diary Company, Cambridge, Mass. Covers period from January 1, 1938 to January 9, 1939, including appointment to Berlin.
- 2 1939 German "EMWE" journal, with notebook, calendar, and attached pencil. Covers period from January 8, 1939 to January 8, 1940.

Folder 5: Journals (2), 1940-1941

- 1 1940 German "EMWE" journal, with notebook, calendar, and attached pencil (lost). Covers period from January 1, 1940 to December 31, 1940.
- 2 1941 German journal. Covers period from January 1, 1941 to May 5, 1941.

Folder 6: Journal Notepads (2), 1940s

- 1 Notepad with brown leather binding. Contains a number of journal entries, not dated except for day of the week and month, but references the date 7/4/1942 in retrospect.
- 2 Notepad. Similar contents to 5, but with no dates visible.