

MS 8

**KNERR, HUGH JOHNSTON, MAJOR GENERAL  
USAF (RETIRED)  
1887-1971**

**Linear ft.: 4  
Approx. no. pgs.: 10,000**

**Papers, 1900-1972**

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Hugh Johnston Knerr was born in Fairfield, Iowa, 30 May 1887. He was graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, on 5 Jun 1908 and was commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Navy. After three-and-a-half years of service in the Navy, he transferred to the Army being commissioned a second lieutenant in the Coast Artillery Corps, Regular Army, 28 Sep 1911. His first assignment in the Coast Artillery was at Fort Monroe, the second (May 1912) was Fort Casey, Puget Sound, Washington, and his third (Dec 1915) was in Hawaii with duty at Fort Ruger. During this assignment, Knerr was promoted to first lieutenant, 1 Jul 1916, and to captain, May 1917.

Returning to the United States, in Sep 1917, he took his pilot training at the aviation school of the Signal Corps at Rockwell Field, San Diego, California, obtaining his military pilot's rating on 15 Dec 1917.

Knerr served as flight instructor and engineering officer at Park and Gerstner Fields until Jun 1918; he was then returned to Hawaii as Commanding Officer, 6<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron, Jul 1918, and then given the assignment as Commanding Officer at Luke Field, Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii. In May 1919, he was transferred to McCook Field, Dayton, Ohio, and served as the Assistant Engineering Officer until Aug 1919, before moving to Fort Barrancas, Florida, for duty with the coast defenses of Pensacola. Knerr was promoted to the rank of major, 1 Jul 1920. From Feb 1922 to Jan 1923, he took advance training at Carlstrom and Kelly Fields. He transferred permanently to the Air Service, U.S. Army, 8 Feb 1924. He was Commanding Officer of the 88<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron and later the 5<sup>th</sup> Division of Air Service at Wilbur Wright Field, Fairfield, Ohio, Feb 1923-Aug 1925 and then commanded the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bombardment Group, Langley Field, Virginia, until Sep 1930. He graduated from the Air Service Tactical School at Langley Field, Jun 1926.

Knerr completed Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Jun 1927, and graduated from the Army War College, Washington, D.C., Jun 1931, at which time he was assigned to Wright Field, Ohio, as Chief of Engineering Division, Air Corps, U.S. Army. With the rank of lieutenant colonel, he became Chief of Staff at Langley Field, Virginia, Mar 1935-Feb 1938. Knerr was promoted to colonel, 26 Aug 1936. In Feb 1938 he was assigned the duty

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as Corps Area Officer at Headquarters Eighth Corps Area, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in which capacity he served until his departure from the service, 31 Mar 1939 for a disability retirement.

Knerr, a civilian, joined the Sperry Gyroscope Company with a position in the Research Laboratory, Jul 1940, and served as a military consultant.

In Oct 1942, Knerr was recalled to active duty as Deputy Commander of the Air Service Command, Army Air Corps. In Jul 1943, with a promotion to brigadier general, he became Deputy Commander of the Eighth Air Force Service Command as well as the Commanding Officer of Air Service Command, U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe. In Mar 1944, Knerr was promoted to major general. Following the end of World War II, Knerr was the Commanding General at Air Technical Service Command, Wright Field, Ohio, Jun 1945-Feb 1946; then he became the Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, Headquarters, USAF.

In Jan 1948, he was assigned the duty of creating the Office of Inspector General for the newly formed independent Air Force. He became the first Inspector General, U.S. Air Force. General Knerr retired, 30 Oct 1949, in his temporary rank of major general.

Gen. Knerr was married to Hazel Dow, 2 Sep 1910, and had two sons, Hugh Salisbury Knerr and Barclay Dow Knerr. His awards and decorations include: Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Bronze Star Medal, the French Croix De Guerre with Palms Degree of Officer, and the British Order of the Bath.

Gen. Hugh J. Knerr died of cancer, 26 Oct 1971, at Bethesda Naval Hospital and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

### SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection relates to General Knerr's military career from 1904-1949. The most significant parts of the material deal with Knerr's role as Commanding General for Air Technical Services Command, which was to become the materiel and logistics command for the Army Air Corps, 1943-1946. The balance, mostly of personal nature, contains materials and correspondence which relate to his formulation of the Logistics Command and his development of the Air Force Inspector General's Office, 1948-1949.

This collection consists of ten boxes of manuscript material arranged in five series: Series 1) Correspondence, 1914-1971; Series 2) Diaries, 1900-1949; Series 3) Manuscript, The Vital Era, 1887-1950, 1971; Series 4) Photographs, 1942-1954; Series 5) Printed Matter, 1972.

**SERIES ONE: CORRESPONDENCE, 1914-1971**, consists of three boxes of memoranda, reports, and correspondence which are militarily oriented and were a function of Knerr's duty assignments. Much of the material is an array of incoming letters commencing with his first duty as an ensign in the U.S. Navy (1908). Four separate sections are contained within this Series: first Knerr's military life prior to his flight training, 1904-1917, including his appointment to and his study at the U.S. Naval Academy, Navy duty as an ensign and his assignment in the Army Coast Artillery; second, military duties after receiving his pilot's rating but prior to World War II,

1917-1943; third, Knerr as a commander during World War II, 1943-1945; and fourth, the time period following World War II until Knerr's retirement from active military service, 1945-1949.

**SERIES TWO: DIARIES, 1900-1949**, consists of five boxes of bound copies of papers which record Knerr's family background, his military training, his duty assignments, and his activities concerning aviation, 1900-1949. The diaries contain random entries of both personal and official references and historical information which span the period from his childhood through his last assignment in the Air Force, 1949. Documents consists of "scrapbook type" materials which contain personal and contemporary historical materials as well as official materials related to Knerr's personal affairs and military career.

**SERIES THREE: MANUSCRIPT, "THE VITAL ERA, 1887-1950,"** consists of a two hundred forty-six page typewritten manuscript compiled by Gen. Knerr consisting of a personal history of his life from his early boyhood days through the last days of his final military assignment in the U.S. Air Force. Included in this series are many personal comments about various military commanders and his ideas relative to the service academies and the formative plans for the Air Force Academy. The series also contains an interview with Gen. Hugh J. Knerr, by an unknown interviewer, 27 Aug 1969, in Gen. Knerr's hometown of Coral Gables, Florida. The interview transcript consists of fifty-five typewritten pages which relate to the many military leaders with whom Knerr was associated in his assignments: President Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Spaatz, Arnold, Eaker, Bradley, LeMay, Andrews, Kaye, Hansell, Goddard, Mitchell, Elliott Roosevelt, etc. Included are Knerr's comments regarding being threatened with a court martial for the foreign policy speeches he was making, and Knerr's fight for a strong, long range air arm. Also included are Knerr's opinions of several of the U.S. military leaders with whom he served, many of whom he believed to be poorly trained and some lacking the ability for leadership or command.

**SERIES FOUR: PHOTOGRAPHS, 1942-1954**, consists of an accumulation of photographs of military leaders who were directly related to the missions to which Gen. Knerr devoted his knowledge and effort. Many World War II leaders are included in this Series, i.e., Arnold, Eisenhower, George, Curtis, Hoag, etc. Many of the photographs are dated and captioned.

**SERIES FIVE: PRINTED MATTER**, consists of the Aerospace Historian, Vol 19, No. 1, Mar 1972. The issue contains an article "Some Recollections of Major General Hugh Johnston Knerr" by Murray Green and an article written by Knerr in 1971 entitled, "Washington to Alaska and Back: Memories of the 1934 U.S. Air Corps Test Flight."

## ARRANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION

### **SERIES ONE            CORRESPONDENCE, 1914-1971**

#### **BOX ONE**

Folder 1            General information, 1916-1945.

- Folder 2 Military, 1917-1944.
- Folder 3 Military, 1944.
- Folder 4 Military, 1945.

**BOX TWO**

- Folder 5 Personal files (family affairs), 1941-1954.
- Folder 6 Personal files (family affairs), 1955-1971.
- Folder 7 Relative to articles written by Knerr, 1942-1967.

**BOX THREE**

- Folder 8 Publishing companies, 1914-1971.
- Folder 9 Noise abatement, 1959-1970.
- Folder 10 News clippings, 1944-1954.
- Folder 11 News clippings, 1955-1967.
- Folder 12 Miscellaneous, with some letters from Eisenhower, Arnold, J. Edgar Hoover, counter intelligence report on Knerr's private cook, 1942-1956.
- Folder 13 Logistics command file, 1971.

**SERIES 'IWO DIARIES, 1900-1949**

(Selected materials 1887-1749 from boxes 4-8 are available on microfilm.)

- BOX FOUR** 1900-1925, Vol. I-IV
- BOX FIVE** 1926-1943, Vol. V-VII
- BOX SIX** 1943-1944, Vol. VIII-XI
- BOX SEVEN** 1944-1945, Vol. XII-XV
- BOX EIGHT** 1946-1949, Vol. XVI-XVIII

**SERIES THREE MANUSCRIPT, "The Vital Era, 1887-1950," 1971**

**BOX NINE**

- Folder 1 "The Vital Era, 1887-1950."
- Folder 2 Interview with Knerr, 1969.

**SERIES FOUR**      **PHOTOGRAPHS, 1942-1954**

**BOX TEN**

Folder 1      Military, 1942-1954.

**SERIES FIVE**      **PRINTED MATTER, 1972**

**BOX TEN**

Folder 2      Aerospace Historian, Vol. 19, No. 1, Mar 1972.