



National Museum of Health and Medicine

Otis Historical Archives

OHA 312 Space Monkeys Collection

Date of Records: 1958-1962

Size: 2 cubic feet, 2 boxes

Finding Aid by: Eric W. Boyle (2012)

Access and Use: The Otis Historical Archives is committed to providing open access to its collections as far as possible within the limits of privacy and confidentiality. The records in the Bricker Photographs Collection contain restricted material. Access to this collection is at the discretion of the Otis Historical Archives and material contained within the records may be subject to review before access is granted.

Background Note: Primate rocket flights began in 1948 with the launch of small monkeys aboard four V-2 rockets at White Sands Proving Grounds in New Mexico. These led to experiments with Aerobee rockets, then the Able and Baker flight with a Jupiter intermediate range ballistic missile. In the late 1950s, NASA managers decided that before America's first manned spacecraft carried humans beyond the atmosphere it was to be thoroughly tested with primate passengers. This decision led to three suborbital and one orbital flight using rhesus monkeys and chimpanzees. The rhesus monkey flights were flown from Wallops Island, Virginia, primarily to provide data on physiological responses to space travel. Able, a rhesus monkey, was born at the Ralph Mitchell Zoo in Independence, Kansas. Able and Miss Baker, a squirrel monkey, became the first monkeys to successfully return to earth after traveling in space. Able died June 1, 1959 while undergoing surgery to remove an infected medical electrode, from a reaction to the anesthesia. In 1961, chimpanzees Ham and Enos completed suborbital and orbital missions, attracting considerable public attention. Later, lesser known experiments were also completed. One of these experiments involved the use of mice and rhesus monkeys to test the biological effects of exposure to high energy heavy cosmic particles present at altitudes of 80,000 feet and above in the stratosphere.

Series/Scope and Content Note: The series in this collection are divided into two main subject areas: material related to research involving the space monkey named Able and material related to additional experiments involving mice and rhesus monkeys to test the biological effects of exposure at high altitudes.

SERIES 001: SPACE MONKEY ABLE

The Space Monkey Able Series includes material primarily related to the death of space monkey Able. Able died unexpectedly during a routine surgery in 1959. This series includes Able's autopsy protocol report, detailed notes from the autopsy, as well as a number of photographic and slide images.



SERIES 002: MOUSE AND MONKEY STUDY

The Mouse and Monkey Study Series includes material related to experiments involving mice and rhesus monkeys to test the biological effects of exposure at high altitudes. This series also includes photos taken during the course of the experiments.

BOX AND CONTENT LIST

SERIES 001: SPACE MONKEY ABLE

Box 001:

- 00001: Space Monkey Able—Case No. 921621—Autopsy Notes
- 00002: Space Monkey Able—Case No. 921621—Col. Blumberg, Autopsy Protocol and Reports
- 00003: Space Monkeys—Clippings
- 00004: Space Monkey Able—Case No. 921621—Autopsy Photographs, Color and Negatives
- 00005: Space Monkey Able—Case No. 921621—Autopsy Photographs, Black and White
- 00006: Space Monkey Able—Case No. 921621—Autopsy Photographs and Images, Misc.
- 00007: Space Monkey Able—Case No. 921621—Autopsy Slides [1 of 2]
- 00008: Space Monkey Able—Case No. 921621—Autopsy Slides [2 of 2]
- 00009: Space Monkey Able—Case No. 921621—X-Ray [1 of 3]
- 00010: Space Monkey Able—Case No. 921621—X-Ray [2 of 3]
- 00011: Space Monkey Able—Case No. 921621—X-Ray [3 of 3]

SERIES 002: MOUSE AND MONKEY STUDY

Box 002:

- 00001: "Mercury Primates," (History), Gregory P. Kennedy (1989)
- 00002: Project Application and Correspondence Material, 1960-61
- 00003: Plans for Mouse Capsule, 1961
- 00004: Research Materials and Correspondence, 1960-61
- 00005: X-Rays, August Run, Berkeley, Haymaker, et al
- 00006: Photographs, Mouse and Monkey Study, July 1961
- 00007: Photographs, Mouse and Monkey Capsules, July-August 1961
- 00008: Photographs, Monkey Necropsy, August 1961