

Charles A. Lundquist Papers

COLLECTION SUMMARY

IDENTIFIER

MA 126

TITLE

Charles A. Lundquist Papers

DATES

1940-1946, 1978-2002

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

0.84 linear feet (2 document cases)

NAME OF CREATOR(S)

Lundquist, Charles A.

LANGUAGE

English

REPOSITORY

South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections

Hilton M. Briggs Library (SBL) Room 241, Box 2115

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ABSTRACT

Charles A. Lundquist (1928–2017) was a physicist and space science administrator whose career included research and leadership roles with the U.S. Army, NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, and the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Born in Webster, South Dakota, he graduated early from high school in 1945 and enrolled at South Dakota State University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in engineering physics. He later received a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Kansas in 1953. Lundquist held positions at Pennsylvania State University's Ordnance Research Laboratory, the Army Ballistic Missile Agency, and NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, where he contributed to early spaceflight initiatives including Explorer 1 and later directed the Space Sciences Laboratory. After retiring from NASA in 1981, he continued his academic and research work in Huntsville and conducted oral history interviews with early rocket scientists, later publishing *Transplanted Rocket Pioneers*.

The papers consist primarily of personal journals dating from 1940 to 1946. Written from his sixth-grade years through his early college experience at South Dakota State College, the journals document Lundquist's youth in Webster, South Dakota, including his academic life, extracurricular activities, family experiences, and reflections on national events. Entries describe school activities, Scouting, sports, work, and community involvement, while also recording local and personal responses to World War II, including rationing, war bond drives, Civil Air Patrol and Victory Corps activities, and reactions to major wartime events such as VE Day, the atomic bombings, and VJ Day. The journals provide a detailed first-person account of youth, education, and civic life in rural South Dakota during the 1940s and document the formative years of an individual who later contributed to American space science.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Charles A. Lundquist was born on March 26, 1928, in Webster, South Dakota. He graduated early from high school in 1945 intending to enlist in the military but instead enrolled at South Dakota State University, earning a Bachelor of Science in engineering physics. He later received a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Kansas in 1953, where he also met and married Patricia Richardson in 1951.

Lundquist began his career as an assistant professor of engineering at Pennsylvania State University, conducting research on homing torpedoes in the university's Ordnance Research Laboratory. Drafted into the U.S. Army in 1954, he completed basic training at Fort Bliss and was assigned to Redstone Arsenal, working in the Guided Missile Development Division while also teaching at Athens College. After completing his service, he became Chief of Physics and Astrophysics at the Army Ballistic Missile Agency.

In 1960, he joined NASA's newly formed Marshall Space Flight Center, contributing to early spaceflight projects including Explorer 1 under the leadership of Wernher von Braun. Two years later, Lundquist became assistant director of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory's Scientific Research Project in Cambridge, Massachusetts, while also serving on NASA's lunar exploration planning group—a position he attributed to the influence of astronomer Fred Lawrence Whipple.

Lundquist returned to the Marshall Space Flight Center in 1973 to serve as Director of the Space Sciences Laboratory following the death of Gerhard B. Heller. There, he played a key role in the Skylab and Space Shuttle programs until his retirement in 1981.

Following his NASA career, Lundquist joined the University of Alabama in Huntsville as Associate Vice President for Research and Director of the Interactive Projects Office. He conducted extensive oral history interviews with early American and German rocket scientists, culminating in the publication of his book *Transplanted Rocket Pioneers*. Although he officially retired in 2000, he continued his research and writing until his death in 2017.

CONTENTS NOTE

The Charles A. Lundquist Papers consist primarily of personal journals spanning from 1940 to 1946. The journals provide a detailed chronological account of Lundquist's youth in Webster, South Dakota, documenting his academic progress, extracurricular involvement, community engagement, and reflections on national and global events—particularly World War II. Entries begin in sixth grade and continue through his early college years at South Dakota State College.

Subjects include daily routines, school activities, Scouting achievements, sports participation, work experiences, and family life. Of notable historical value are Lundquist's observations of wartime developments, such as rationing, war bond drives, local Civil Air Patrol and Victory Corps efforts, and reactions to major WWII events, including VE Day, the atomic bombings, and VJ Day. His entries also provide a rare student perspective on education, civic responsibility, and youth culture in mid-20th-century rural America. The journals reflect a disciplined, curious, and civically engaged young man who carefully documented his development as a student, citizen, and aspiring scientist.

These papers offer unique insight into the lived experiences of a Midwestern youth during World War II, capturing both personal development and broader societal impacts through the lens of an individual who would go on to become a key figure in American space science. The journals also serve as a rich resource for understanding adolescent life, education, and patriotism in small-town America during the 1940s.

SUBJECT HEADINGS

SUBJECTS

- Youth

PERSONS

- Lundquist, Charles A.

ACCESS

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Requests to publish should be arranged with the SDSU Archives and Special Collections.

CONTAINER LIST

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
1	1	Journal	1940 March-June
1	2	Journal	1941 January-October
1	3	Journal	1942, January-February, June-August
1	4	Journal	1943 January-March
1	5	Journal	1943 March-May
1	6	Journal	1943 June-July
1	7	Journal	1943 July-August
1	8	Journal	1943 August-September
1	9	Journal	1943 September-December
1	10	Journal	1944 January-March
1	11	Journal	1944 April-June
1	12	Journal	1944 July-September
1	13	Journal	1944 September-October
1	14	Journal	1944 October-November
1	15	Journal	1944 December
2	1	Journal	1945 January-February
2	2	Journal	1945-March-April
2	3	Journal	1945 May-August
2	4	Journal	1945 August-November
2	5	Journal	1945 November-December
2	6	Journal	1946 January-March
2	7	Journal	1946 March-June
2	8	Journal	1946 June-July
2	9	Journal	1946 July-December