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**Exhibition:** <https://airandspace.si.edu/exhibitions/nation-speed>

**Photos:** <https://www.flickr.com/gp/airandspace/4C262Si15s>

## Fact Sheet “Nation of Speed”

**Title:** “Nation of Speed”

**Opening:** Oct. 14, 2022, National Air and Space Museum, Washington, D.C., Gallery 203

The United States is a nation of speed. Throughout history, Americans have shaped their lives and the world by embracing technologies that shatter time and distance not only in the air and in space, but also on land and sea. “Nation of Speed” explores the deep-rooted connection between people and machines through the history they made together. The story of speed is central to the understanding of transportation, motorsports and the military in American history and culture. “Nation of Speed” is a collaboration between the National Air and Space Museum and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History.

### Highlights include:

- **Turner RT-14 Meteor Air Racer:** Roscoe Turner flew this classic 1930s air racer to victory in the 1938 and 1939 Thompson Trophy contests.
- **STP Hawk No. 2 Indianapolis 500 Racer:** Originally his backup car, this STP Hawk got Mario Andretti to the checkered flag in the 1969 Indianapolis 500.
- **Modified Harley-Davidson XR-750 Motorcycle:** Robert Craig “Evel” Knievel combined skill, showmanship and patriotism in death-defying motorcycle flights over vehicles. He performed some of his most spectacular jumps on this modified Harley-Davidson XR-750.
- **Pontiac No. 43 NASCAR Racer:** Driving this race car, Richard Petty claimed his 200th and final NASCAR victory in the Firecracker 400 at the Daytona International Speedway.
- **Sharp DR 90 Nemesis Air Racer:** The most successful aircraft in air racing history, Nemesis dominated its competition, winning 47 of its 50 contests from 1991 until its retirement in 1999. Flown by pilot and co-designer Jon Sharp, it won nine consecutive Reno Gold National Championships and 16 world speed records for its class.
- **Sonic Wind No. 1 Rocket Sled:** This rocket sled, moving faster than a bullet, enabled Col. John Stapp to push the limits of the human body at high speed. Stapp conducted research on

human responses to acceleration, deceleration and windblast at supersonic speeds at the Aeromedical Field.

- **X-15 Engine:** The XLR-99 Pioneer rocket motor powered the fastest, highest-flying aircraft ever built, the North American X-15 aerospace plane. More than just a record setter, the X-15 performed scientific research that provided invaluable data toward the design of the Space Shuttle and advanced hypersonic flight.
- **Mark 4 Reentry Vehicle for Titan I Missile:** This nuclear warhead for the Titan I ICBM yielded a blast 250 times more powerful than the one that destroyed Hiroshima Aug. 6, 1945. When an ICBM is launched, a booster lifts the missile high enough to leave the Earth's atmosphere.
- **Gilmore:** Gilmore the Flying Lion was the pet of the flamboyant air racer and aerial showman Col. Roscoe Turner. Gilmore flew with Turner when he broke speed records flying from Los Angeles to New York and from Vancouver, Canada, to Aguascalientes, Mexico. For nine months, they flew together before Gilmore got too big.
- **Blackbird Gear:** This high-altitude suit, including a full-pressure coverall, gloves and pressure helmet, was worn by crew flying the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird, which operated up to 85,000 feet (26 kilometers), an altitude with potentially fatal reduced oxygen and low air pressure.
- **Glenn Curtiss Motorcycle:** Before achieving fame in aeronautics, Glenn Curtiss started his career with motorcycles. Curtiss took this motorcycle to the Florida Speed Carnival at Ormond Beach in January 1907, where recorded a record-setting speed of 136 mph (218 km/h) during his run and was dubbed "the fastest man on Earth."
- **BMW S 100 RR motorcycle:** Erin Sills set her own land speed record in this BMW S 100 RR motorcycle in 2016. She hit 219.3 mph from a standing start on a 1.5-mile track in Mojave, California.
- **Take the Controls Interactive:** Using a touchscreen and joystick, visitors experience what it is like to drive various vehicles at increasing speeds to learn about the difficulties of maintaining control at high speeds.
- **Evel Knievel Pinball Physics Interactive:** Visitors get the chance to jump a ramp through a pinball machine just like Evel Knievel. They can experiment with the angle of the launch ramp, position of the landing ramp and pinball speed, which all come into consideration while determining the distance a daredevil can jump.

**Sponsor:** Rolex

## **"Nation of Speed" Curator Bios**

### **Jeremy Kinney**

Jeremy R. Kinney is the associate director for research and curatorial affairs at the National Air and Space Museum. He leads the museum's three research and curatorial departments and provides counsel and advice on curatorial and museum affairs to the director and senior leadership team. As a curator, Kinney oversees three collections at the museum: interwar and World War II American military aviation, air racing and aircraft propulsion. They number approximately 4,000 artifacts and

range in size from a small puddle carburetor from 1911 to military fighter and bomber aircraft from World War II. All three collections document how communities developed high-performance aircraft and technology to express their visions of what flight could achieve for humankind in times of peace and war. Kinney was co-curator for the Barron Hilton Pioneers of Flight Gallery at the museum. He also curated exhibits and displays on aircraft propulsion systems, military aviation and jet aircraft. Kinney earned a Bachelor of Arts from Greensboro College and a doctorate in history from Auburn University.

### **Thomas Paone**

Thomas Paone curates the lighter-than-air collection, including balloons, blimps, and airships at the National Air and Space Museum. The collection consists of over 500 items, from small pieces of fabric from the Hindenburg airship, to the Explorer II gondola, which produced the first ever image showing the curvature of the Earth. The lighter-than-air collection embodies some of the earliest attempts at piloted flight, as well as artifacts representing record-breaking balloon flights. Paone has been an exhibition team member for several galleries in the museum, including Time and Navigation: The Untold Story of Getting from Here to There and the Boeing Milestones of Flight Hall. Paone's research focuses on ballooning in the Civil War, as well as the use of airships and blimps in America. He received his BA from Gettysburg College, and an MA in American History from George Mason University.

### **Paul Johnston**

Paul F. Johnston is curator of transportation at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, specializing in maritime and motorcycle history. Like National Air and Space Museum's Paul E. Garber, whose 1913 Harley-Davidson is at the American History Museum, Johnston is an enthusiastic motorcyclist, commuting year-round on two wheels. He has curated more than a dozen exhibitions and written or edited more than six books; his most recent volume on the wreck of Hawaiian monarch Kamehameha II's royal yacht received the Smithsonian Secretary's Research Award. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in English literature from Middlebury College and a doctorate in anthropology/archaeology from the University of Pennsylvania.

### **Roger White**

Roger White is curator emeritus of road transportation at the National Museum of American History. He curated a collection of 225 vehicles and numerous small objects that shed light on the increasing importance of personal mobility in America, with emphasis on the intersection of technology, design and social and cultural history. The collection ranges from significant prototype cars such as the Duryea brothers' 1893 motor carriage to modern race cars and safety technologies for production cars. White co-curated "America on the Move," the American History Museum's permanent exhibition hall, and temporary exhibitions about recreational travel, family cars, electric cars and auto safety. He received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and a Master of Arts in American civilization from the University of Delaware (Hagley Fellowship).

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