



## George Bush Presidential Library

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## Richard Switlik Collection Switlik Parachute Company, Incorporated

### Extent

4 folders

### Access

Collection is open to all researchers. Donated historical materials held by the Bush Library are processed in accordance with the deed of gift agreement. These materials are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

### Copyright

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### Provenance

Gift Sarah and Stanley Switlik, 1944–1997

### Processed By

Staff Archivists, June 2019

### Related Collections

Related collections at the George Bush Presidential Library may be found in the Audio/Visual Collection

### Scope and Content

The Richard Switlik Collection consists of forms, certificates, letters, copies of photographs, a spiral bound booklet, a fact sheet, and a master's thesis. The form is George Bush's original application to the Switlik Caterpillar Club; the official Caterpillar Club Certificate; letters between Richard Switlik and George Bush, between Mr. Switlik and James Egan, and between George Bush and Mrs. Frasier; photographs of George Bush with the Switliks, of George Bush during parachute events, and George Bush during WWII; a spiral bound booklet *Getting It Right*; a Switlik Company fact sheet; and a master's thesis *Switlik: The History of a Parachute Manufacturer*.

### **Biographical Note**

Richard Switlik, Sr.'s father, Stanley, emigrated from Poland in 1907 and opened the Canvas-Leather Specialty Company which produced products such as hampers, golf bags, coal bags, and eventually U.S. Post Office leather mail bags. In the 1930s, it became the Switlik Parachute & Equipment Company and was the largest manufacturer of parachutes in the United States. In 1941, the government asked for an increase in production 50-fold and the Switlik Parachute Company, Inc. supplied up to 90% of all parachutes used by the Navy. During World War II, Lt. (jg) George Bush was wearing a Switlik parachute when he was forced to make an emergency jump after his plane was hit by Japanese anti-aircraft fire over Chichijima. After returning home, George Bush applied and was accepted to become a member of the Switlik Caterpillar Club, along with others who had also endured emergency jumps using a Switlik parachute.

Richard Switlik, Sr. was a 1939 University of Pennsylvania graduate and served as a captain in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II. After the war he returned home to become involved with the family business. He eventually became President of the Switlik Parachute Company when his father, Stanley, retired to Honorary Chairman of the Board. Along the way, Richard and George Bush made contact and the two corresponded over the years, most often about parachutes. During this time Richard saw the company expand production from parachutes to life vests, life rafts, and other survival gear. He passed away on June 4, 2004 at the age of 85.

His son, Richard, Jr. was also actively involved in the family business and is now Honorary Chairman of the Board while his grandson, Stanley II, now serves as President and his great granddaughter, Sarah, as Director of Marketing.

### **System of Arrangement**

The Richard Switlik Collection is arranged into one series. Following is a list of the series and its descriptions.

#### **Box 1            Switlik Parachute Company, Inc.**

- [Caterpillar Club Application and Certificate]
- [Correspondence relating to Switlik parachutes and the Caterpillar Club]
- [Getting It Right—President Bush's parachute jumps]
- Switlik: The History of a Parachute Manufacturer

**Last modified:** 07/12/2019