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National Air and Space Museum

Geraldyn "Jerrie" M. Cobb Papers

2017

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Geraldyn "Jerrie" M. Cobb Papers
Date:	(bulk 1952-1998)
Identifier:	NASM.2017.0035
Creator:	Cobb, Geraldyn "Jerrie" Menor
Extent:	1.5 Cubic feet ((3 boxes))
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Jerrie Cobb Foundation, Gift, 2017

Preferred Citation

Geraldyn "Jerrie" M. Cobb Papers, Accession 2017-0035, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access.

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Biographical / Historical

Geraldyn M. "Jerrie" Cobb (b.1931), earned her private pilot's license at age sixteen. She attended Oklahoma College for Women (now University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma) for one year, and played semiprofessional softball with the Oklahoma City Queens, saving the money to buy a surplus World War II Fairchild PT-23 and a chance to be self-employed. Due to the return of many qualified male pilots after World War II, Cobb had to take on less sought-after jobs, such as patrolling pipelines and crop dusting. She went on to earn her Multi-Engine, Instrument, Flight Instructor, and Ground Instructor ratings as well as her Airline Transport license. In 1953, she was employed by Fleetway, Inc., ferrying war surplus aircraft to various air forces and civilian aircraft enterprises, including to the Peruvian Air Force. At a fueling stop in Ecuador, she was arrested for suspected espionage. After two years, Cobb returned to the United States and became a pilot and manager for the Aero Design and Engineering Company, which made the Aero Commander aircraft she used in setting her three world aviation records: the 1959 world record for nonstop long-distance flight, the 1959 world light-plane speed record, and a 1960 world altitude record for lightweight aircraft of 37,010 feet. She was one of the few women executives in aviation and was also the first woman to fly in the Paris Air Show. In addition to these aviation accomplishments, Cobb was one of the thirteen Fellow Lady Astronaut Trainees (FLATS) (also referred to as the Mercury 13), who underwent the same physical tests as the

original Mercury astronauts. She went through NASA's rigorous testing program and passed all the training exercises, ranking in the top two percent of all astronaut candidates. In May 1961, NASA Administrator James Webb appointed Cobb as a consultant to the NASA space program for the future use of women as astronauts. However, she was unable to rally support in Congress for adding women to the astronaut program and so resigned from her position. Cobb then became a private pilot conducting humanitarian aid missions to the peoples of the Amazon rain forests in six South American nations, spending her time as a solo pilot delivering food, medicine and other aid to indigenous people while surveying new air routes to remote areas. Cobb has been honored by the Brazilian, Colombian, Ecuadorian, French, and Peruvian governments. Over her career Cobb received numerous aviation awards, including the 1959 National Pilot's Association Pilot of the Year; the Harmon International Trophy; the Amelia Earhart Gold Medal of Achievement; the Bishop Wright Air Industry Award; and the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale's Gold Wings Award. Cobb published two autobiographies, *Woman Into Space*, and *Solo Pilot*. In 1999, Cobb was the subject of an unsuccessful National Organization for Women campaign to send her to space (like Senator John Glenn) to investigate the effects of aging. She continues her relief efforts for the peoples of the Amazon.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of 1.3 cubic feet of archival material documenting the aviation and space careers of Geraldyn M. "Jerrie" Cobb, 1952-1998. The following types of materials are included: magazine articles; photographs; scrapbooks; licenses; brochures; maps; VHS tapes; and manuals and handbooks. The collection is a mix of her early flying career, her potential astronaut project (FLATS / Mercury 13), and her Amazonian humanitarian flights.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Aeronautics -- Flights
- Aeronautics in missionary work
- Astronautics
- Humanitarian assistance

Types of Materials:

- Articles
- Brochures
- Maps
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks

Names:

- United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Places:

- Amazonas (Brazil)