



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

William C. McDonald Papers

2017

National Air and Space Museum Archives
14390 Air & Space Museum Parkway
Chantilly, VA 20151
NASMRefDesk@si.edu
<https://airandspace.si.edu/archives>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	William C. McDonald Papers
Date:	(bulk 1917-1980s, 2016)
Identifier:	NASM.2017.0048
Creator:	McDonald, William C., 1906-1984
Extent:	2 Cubic feet ((7 boxes))
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

William C. McDonald, III, Gift, 2017

Related Materials

William C. McDonald Papers,

Preferred Citation

William C. McDonald Papers, Accession 2017-0048, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access.

Conditions Governing Use

Material is subject to Smithsonian Terms of Use. Should you wish to use NASM material in any medium, please submit an Application for Permission to Reproduce NASM Material, available at [Permissions Requests](#)

Biographical / Historical

William Clifford "Mac" McDonald (1906-1984) received his first airplane ride at age 14 from his neighbor, World War I ace, James "Jimmy" Meissner. After attending college at Washington and Lee University (Lexington, VA) and Howard College (Birmingham, AL), McDonald joined the 106th Observation Squadron of the Alabama National Guard, where he was an airplane mechanic. McDonald decided he wanted to be a pilot, and in May 1930 he was appointed as a US Army Air Corps Flying Cadet at Brooks Field, Texas. In 1931, McDonald was assigned to the 94th Pursuit Squadron at Selfridge Field, Michigan, and by June 1932 he had completed his active duty, graduated, and was released from the Army Air Forces. As McDonald was unable to find a job as a civilian pilot, he soon reenlisted in the Army so that he could join Claire Chennault's newly formed Army aerial aerobatics team, "Men on the Flying Trapeze." From 1932 to 1936 the aerobatics team participated in numerous air shows. Through William Pauley, president of Central Aviation Manufacturing Company (CAMCO), the aerobatic team pilots met with Chinese Air Force General Mow Pang-Tsu who, impressed with their performance, invited them to come to China to train Chinese pilots in the American

military flying style. MacDonald and his teammate John H. "Luke" Williamson, resigned from the Army Air Corps and accepted the offer and left for China during the summer of 1936, with Chennault following in 1937. MacDonald became the senior American Instructor for the Central Aviation School, located outside Hangchow, China. Madame Chiang Kai-Shek headed the Chinese Commission on Aeronautics Affairs and was the real power behind the aviation school. During the fall of 1936, MacDonald was also assigned to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's squadron and several times served as his pilot on military business. After four years training Chinese pilots, MacDonald resigned from the school and started with the Chinese National Aviation Corporation (CNAC) ferrying vital supplies in China for the Chinese Air Force, Chennault's American Volunteer Group "Flying Tigers," and then the 14th Air Force. By mid-1943, MacDonald was the Operations Assistant in Calcutta, India, and by the end of the year, he was the Chief Pilot. In Calcutta, MacDonald met his wife, Margaret "Peggy" Spain, who was volunteering with the American Red Cross. The McDonald's left China in 1947, when Mac stepped down as Chief Pilot and took a transfer to Pan American Airways (PAA), working first in the United States and then for three years in Brazil. After his wife contracted polio in South America, MacDonald moved his family back to Birmingham and he stopped flying. By that point, MacDonald had over 20,000 flying hours. MacDonald helped to found the CNAC Association and served as its president. Through MacDonald's publishing company, the four volumes of Wings over Asia, which contained first person stories from CNAC personnel and friends, were published. MacDonald was inducted in the Alabama Aviation Hall of Fame in 1981, and passed away in 1984.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of two cubic feet of material relating to William C. "Mac" McDonald's flying career, focusing on his time in the Army Air Forces as one of the "Men on the Flying Trapeze," his time training Chinese pilots at the Central Aviation School to fly before and during World War II, and as a Chinese National Aviation Corporation (CNAC) pilot flying the "Hump," and ferrying vital supplies in China for the Chinese troops, the "Flying Tigers" and the 14th Air Force. The material includes the following types of material: photographs, correspondence, military records, manuscripts, and newspaper articles. The collection contains material referencing the following notables: Claire Chennault, Anna Chennault, Frank "Dude" Higgs, Charles "Chuck" Sharp, Sebie Smith, Milton Caniff and Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- World War, 1939-1945 -- China

Types of Materials:

- Correspondence
- Manuscripts
- Newspaper clippings
- Photographs

Names:

- American Volunteer Group
- Caniff, Milton Arthur, 1907-1988
- Chennault, Anna
- Chennault, Claire Lee, 1893-1958

Chiang, Kai-shek, 1887-1975
Chiang, May-ling Soong, 1897-2003
China National Aviation Corporation