



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Katherine Cheung Collection

Patti Williams

2018

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
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Katherine Cheung Collection
Date:	1920s-2000s
Identifier:	NASM.2018.0015
Extent:	0.49 Cubic feet (Legal Document Box)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection consists of mostly copies of material documenting the aviation career of Katherine Cheung.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Ed Moy, Gift, 2018, NASM.2018.0015

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Patti Williams, 2018.

Preferred Citation

Katherine Cheung Collection, NASM.2018.0015, 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

Katherine Cheung (1904-2003) was born in China but moved to California at age 17 to study music. Her father would take her to Dycer Airport (Los Angeles) to practice driving a car, and during this time she became fascinated with aircraft and flying. After studying piano at University of Southern California for three years, Cheung quit school, married, and had two daughters before beginning aviation classes in 1931. She took flying lessons with the Chinese Aeronautical Association in Los Angeles; her flight instructor was Bert Ekstein, and she soloed after 12 1/2 hours of instruction. Cheung earned her license in 1932, becoming the first woman pilot of Chinese descent to earn a pilot's license in the United States. After attaining her license she started performing aerobatics at fairs and air shows in California. She also regularly entered competitive air races, including the 1936 Ruth Chatterton Derby from Los Angeles to Cleveland, and was friendly with many of the renowned aviators of the time. In 1935, Cheung obtained her international flight license, and in 1936 she became a US Citizen, although she began to contemplate returning to China to teach aviation. After

Japan invaded China in 1937, she traveled to Chinese American communities across the country, raising more than \$7,000 to buy a Ryan ST-A plane, which she planned to fly to China and use to train volunteer pilots. However, on the day she was accepting the aircraft from a group of her benefactors at Dycer field, her cousin crashed the aircraft, ending his life and Cheung's dream of training Chinese pilots. In 1942, when she was 38, she quit flying and operated a flower shop until her retirement in 1970. Cheung was a member of the Ninety-Nines international organization of women pilots (joined in 1935) and was inducted into the Women in Aviation International Pioneer Hall of Fame. She was presented a medal by the Chinese Consul General of Los Angeles on behalf of the Chinese government for her contributions as an aviation pioneer in 2001.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of .45 cubic ft of mostly copies of the following types of material documenting the aviation career of Katherine Cheung: correspondence, newspaper articles, magazines, programs, photographs, and biographical information, in both English and Chinese, as well as a DVD copy of the documentary, *Aviatrix: The Katherine Sui Fun Cheung Story*. This collection also contains a cassette tape of interview of Cheung entitled, "Meet Mrs. Katherine Cheung Young, Pioneer Aviatrix of Los Angeles," conducted by Munson Kwok in 1983.

Arrangement

Arranged by type.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Chinese Americans
- Women in aeronautics

Cultures:

- Chinese Americans

Names:

- Cheung, Katherine
- Ninety-Nines (Organization)