



Smithsonian
National Air and Space Museum

"Explorer II" Motion Picture Film

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2018

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	"Explorer II" Motion Picture Film
Identifier:	NASM.2018.0071
Date:	1935
Extent:	0.17 Cubic feet (2 reels)
Creator:	U.S. Army Air Corps
Language:	English
Summary:	Launched on November 11, 1935, from the Stratobowl near Rapid City, South Dakota, "Explorer II" carried Captain Albert Stevens, Captain Orvil Anderson, and an assortment of instruments to a world record altitude of 22,066 kilometers (72,395 feet). This collection consists of two reels of 16mm silent motion picture film relating to "Explorer II."

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Lee Anne Willson, Gift, 2018, NASM.2018.0071

Processing Information

Arranged and described (2018) and encoded (2020) by Jessamyn Lloyd.

Preferred Citation

"Explorer II" Motion Picture Film, NASM.2018.0071, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Launched on November 11, 1935, from the Stratobowl near Rapid City, South Dakota, "Explorer II" carried Captain Albert Stevens, Captain Orvil Anderson, and an assortment of instruments to a world record altitude of 22,066 kilometers (72,395 feet). The venture was funded jointly by the United States Army Air Corps and the National Geographic Society. The first world altitude-record attempt, in 1934 in "Explorer I," ended unsuccessfully when the balloon ripped and the hydrogen inside mixed with air and exploded. "Explorer II" was redesigned with wider portholes and a larger balloon which was filled with helium. The crew was also reduced from three to two and the scientific payload was halved. The record-setting "Explorer II" flight was a success in numerous ways such as aerial photography, including the first photographs showing the division between the troposphere and the stratosphere and the actual curvature of the earth from the record altitude; demonstrating the potential of high-altitude, long-range reconnaissance from manned balloons; and collecting data for studies in cosmic ray research, the ozone layer, aeronomy, meteorology, biology, and radio propagation in the high atmosphere. The flight was also a public relations success for the Army and the National Geographic Society, and was a successful venture between government, military, and civilian scientific interests.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of two reels of 16mm silent motion picture film relating to "Explorer II." The two reels comprise one film entitled *Man's Farthest Afloat* that was produced by the US Army Air Corps in 1935. The film includes various views of the "Explorer II" gondola and balloon (including inflation); scenes at the Stratobowl near Rapid City, South Dakota; and views of "Explorer II" in flight and landing. Albert William Stevens and Orvil A. Anderson are both seen in the footage, and they can be seen receiving the Hubbard Medal (National Geographic Society) from John J. Pershing at the end of the film.

Arrangement

Collection is in original order.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Aeronautics
Explorer II (Balloon)

Types of Materials:

Moving images