



Smithsonian  
*National Air and Space Museum*

Geraldyn "Jerrie" M. Cobb Collection [Gawey]

Patti Williams

2020

National Air and Space Museum Archives  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Air and Space Museum Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Geraldyn "Jerrie" M. Cobb Collection [Gawey]
<b>Identifier:</b>	NASM.2020.0018
<b>Date:</b>	1950s - 2000s
<b>Extent:</b>	0.2 Cubic feet (One slim letter document case.)
<b>Creator:</b>	Cobb, Geraldyn "Jerrie" Menor
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Summary:</b>	This collection consists of .20 cubic feet of archival material documenting the aviation and space careers of Geraldyn M. "Jerrie" Cobb, 1950s - 2000s.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Dena Gawey, Gift, 2020, NASM.2020.0018

### Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Patti Williams, 2020.

### Preferred Citation

Geraldyn "Jerrie" M. Cobb Collection [Gawey], NASM.2020.0018, 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](#).

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## Biographical / Historical

Geraldyn M. "Jerrie" Cobb (1931 - 2019), 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 semi-professional softball with the Oklahoma City Queens, saving her pay to buy a surplus World War II

Fairchild PT-23 and gain 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 continued her relief efforts for the peoples of the Amazon until her death in 2019.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection consists of .20 cubic feet of archival material documenting the aviation and space careers of Geraldyn M. "Jerrie" Cobb, 1950s - 2000s. The following types of materials are included: magazine and newspaper articles; correspondence with her family, especially her Uncle Fred Cobb and Aunt Kate Cobb relating to her Amazonian humanitarian flights; color and black and white photographs; brochures; and programs.

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## Arrangement

This collection is arranged by type.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Aeronautics

Aeronautics -- South America

Aeronautics in missionary work  
Humanitarian assistance

Types of Materials:

Correspondence  
Photographs

Geographic Names:

Amazonas (Brazil)