



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Peter William "PW" Atkinson Letter and Photographs

Patti Williams

2023

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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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:	Peter William "PW" Atkinson Letter and Photographs
Date:	January 12, 1941
Identifier:	NASM.2023.0041
Creator:	Atkinson, Peter William
Extent:	0.01 Cubic feet (One letter folder)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection consists of two photographs and a letter from Peter William "PW" Atkinson to Conrad Welling, written on January 12, 1941, discussing flying the Curtiss P-40 Warhawk.
Digital Content:	Image(s): Peter William "PW" Atkinson Letter and Photographs

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Patty Welling Leugers, Gift, 2023, NASM.2023.0041

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Patti Williams, 2023.

Preferred Citation

Peter William "PW" Atkinson Letter and Photographs, NASM.2023.0041, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Peter William "PW" Atkinson (died 1941) was a pilot in the U.S. Army Air Corps and recruited into the American Volunteer Group (AVG). The AVG, better known as the "Flying Tigers," was organized in 1941 as a mercenary air unit to support the Chinese against Japanese air attacks and help protect the vital supply route into China known as The Burma Road. On July 10, 1941 AVG recruits, including Atkinson, boarded the M/V Jagersfontein and sailed from the Port of San Francisco to the Port of Rangoon, Burma. After arriving August

15th, the pilots then boarded the train and headed northward to the town of Toungoo. Atkinson was in training at the AVG's Kyedaw Airfield near Toungoo, Burma when on October 25, 1941 he entered a power dive over the airfield when a catastrophic equipment failure occurred and his Curtiss-Wright P-40B Tomahawk disintegrated, killing him instantly. Atkinson was first buried in grave #3 of the Airmen's Cemetery at St. Luke's Anglican Church in Toungoo, but in 1947 an Army Graves Registration Service (AGRS) team went to the cemetery and disinterred four sets of remains identified as AVG and transferred them to Barrackpore, India where autopsies were conducted on the skeletal remains and they were re-buried. In late 1948 the bodies were again disinterred and transferred to Hawaii where they were interred in the Punchbowl Cemetery on Oahu, Hawaii. Atkinson's body remained in Oahu for 67 years until the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) staff reviewed the files and notified his family, leading to his remains being disinterred again in 2016. After DNA samples confirmed that the remains were Atkinson's, he was interred for a final time in the Rosedale Cemetery, Martinsburg, Berkeley County, West Virginia, United States. Atkinson is commemorated on the Monument to the Aviation Martyrs in the War of Resistance Against Japan in Nanjing, China.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of a letter from Peter William "PW" Atkinson to Conrad Welling, written on January 12, 1941, discussing flying the Curtiss P-40 Warhawk. The letter also contained two photographs of Atkinson.

Arrangement

By type.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Curtiss P-40 Warhawk Family
- World War, 1939-1945

Types of Materials:

- Correspondence

Names:

- American Volunteer Group