Descriptive Finding Guide for the Frank T. Courtney Personal Papers
SDASM.SC.10031

Finding aid prepared by Alan Renga
San Diego Air and Space Museum Library and Archives
2001 Pan American Plaza, Balboa Park
San Diego, CA, 92101
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10/17/2014
Title: Frank T. Courtney Personal Papers
Identifier/Call Number: SDASM.SC.10031
Contributing Institution: San Diego Air and Space Museum Library and Archives
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 0.36 Cubic feet1 Manuscript Box
Date (inclusive): 1914-1977
Abstract: Frank Courtney started his aviation career in 1913, flying in World War I, World War II, and serving in commercial and military aviation for decades. His collection contains IDs, passports, and journals from 1922-1971.
Conditions Governing Access note
The collection is open to researchers by appointment.
Conditions Governing Use note
Some copyright may be reserved. Consult with the library director for more information.
Preferred Citation note
[Item], [Filing Unit], [Series Title], [Subgroups], [Record Group Title and Number], [Repository “San Diego Air & Space Museum Library & Archives”]
Immediate Source of Acquisition note
The papers of Frank T. Courtney were donated to the San Diego Aerospace Museum Library and Archives on October 7, 1980.
Scope and Contents note
Frank T. Courtney’s personal collection of papers and diaries relates to nearly all aspects of his lifelong career in aviation. The diaries cover the daily aspects of his career and life, the documents cover the legal aspect of his flying and immigration, and the correspondence covers the publication of his book, The Eighth Sea. The records date from 1914 to 1977 and include correspondence, correspondence reply record, diaries, medical waivers, passports, and sport and pilot’s licenses.
http://www.flickr.com/photos/sdasmarchives/sets/72157633336654453/
Biographical/Historical note
Frank T. Courtney (1894-1982) was born in London and was one of the few aviators that could make the claim that he was there for it all. He started his career with an apprenticeship at the Grahame-White Aircraft Company in 1913 and attained his pilot’s certificate in August 1914 flying primitive box-kite airplanes. He attained the rank of Captain while serving in the Royal Flying Corps in WWI while flying in a Morane-Saulnier “Parasol.” After the war Courtney became a test pilot for De Havilland and in between testing planes he was an avid air racer. The early 1920’s saw Courtney pioneer airline service routes between Britain and the European Continent across the English Channel for Daimler Airways. In 1925 Courtney tested the newly invented autogiro and helped with its development into a practical concept. Courtney’s next pioneering venture came in 1927 and 1928 when he tried and failed on two separate occasions to prove the concept of an airline service route between Europe and North America by flying unsuccessfully across the Atlantic from east to west.
In 1928 Courtney came to the USA as a technical-assistant to the Curtiss-Wright Corporation, went back to England in 1936 to test hydroplanes, and returned to the USA 1940 to test planes for Convair. During WWII he served as a ferry pilot routinely flying B-24’s and PBY’s for delivery. After the war Courtney served as an advisor to Boeing and finished up his aviation career by participating in the development of the Atlas Missile. He published an autobiography, The Eighth Sea, in 1972 through Doubleday publishing (Published as Flight Path in the UK). He was married to Constance May “Ginger” Filby (1901-1968).
Related Archival Materials note
Some of this Collection has been digitized and placed on Flickr.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Courtney, Frank T. , 1914-1974
Atlas (missile)--history
Consolidated B-24 Liberator Family
**Box 01**

**Physical Description:**
2. Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) Annual Sporting License, USA, 1929.
3. USA Transport Pilot’s License 27 Mar 1930.
4. Royal Aero Club Competition Register, 1914.
5. FAI British Empire Aviator’s Certificate, 20 Aug 1914.
6. FAI Great Britain, Royal Aero Club License, 1922.
7. USA Department of Commerce, Pilot’s License no. 7982 and, exp. 15 Mar 1939.
8. USA Department of Commerce Pilot’s Identification Card and Statement of Medical Examiner.
10. Immigrant ID Card (Green Card), 19 Feb 1940.
11. Selective Service Permit to leave country on nature of military secret, 3 May 1944.
13. UK Air Ministry Pilot’s License, 16 Dec 1922 to 15 Jun 1923.
15. Great Britain Air Ministry Pilot’s Certificate and License 03 Jul 1924 and 29 Jan 1925.
17. USA Passport, 5 Nov 1946.
19. Leather-Bound, metal 6-ring binder containing notes by Courtney on planes flown and when and a few notes on his Diary, undated.
20. Envelope, Frank T. Courtney, contains: “Remarks on Diary Collection,” 7 Jun 1971 (read to understand what Diaries are about).