

Guide to the
James J. "Jimmie" Mattern Collection
(1905 - 1988)

7.5 linear feet

Accession Number:
Collection Number:

Collection Dates: 1906 - 1991
Bulk Dates: 1932 - 1949

Prepared by
Thomas J. Allen

CITATION: The James J. "Jimmie" Mattern Collection, Box number Folder number,
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University of Texas at Dallas.

Special Collections Department
McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas

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Biographical Sketch:

Jimmie Mattern was born on March 8th, 1905 in Freeport, Illinois. Jimmie took his first flight, in a JN-4 Jenny, while he was stationed with the army in Hawaii. He returned to the United States and spent several years playing in a band on ocean liners traveling the Pacific. In 1926 Jimmy learned to fly at Ryan Field in San Diego, purchased a Waco 10 and did some barnstorming. Deciding to settle in California Jimmie became a Hollywood Stunt pilot flying aircraft in the films *Hell's Angels*, *Lilac Time*, and *Wings*, among others. In 1929 Jimmie began flying cargo for Tex Mex Industries. This led to him getting a job as a pilot with a Texas oil wildcatter named Carl Cromwell. In 1929/1930 Cromwell decided to start a local Texas airline that would operate between Oklahoma, Fort Worth, San Angelo, and Brownsville, Texas. Jimmie became chief pilot for Cromwell Airlines (as it was called) until the airline folded in 1932.

After leaving Cromwell Jimmie decided to attempt to beat the around the world flight record recently set by Wiley Post and Harold Gatty. Mattern teamed up with a friend named Bennett Griffin who would serve as navigator and co-pilot. With the backing of the Standard Oil Company, Clarence Page, and others, the two men would attempt to fly a modified Lockheed Vega named "The Century of Progress" around the world. In 1932 they took off on their around the world adventure. Mattern and Griffin first set the speed record to Berlin. After leaving Berlin they were approaching Moscow when a hatch on their plane broke loose. It struck the tail section of the plane and forced Mattern to set the aircraft down. Although they had arranged for permission to over fly Russia, local officials arrested the aviators and held them for propaganda purposes. Eventually they were taken to Moscow and The Kremlin, where they were interrogated as spies. The US government and local contacts eventually secured Mattern and Griffin's release, and the two aviators made their way back to the United States by commercial airliner and steamship, stopping in many of Europe's capital cities. Eventually the Russian's crated up the wreckage of "The Century of Progress" and shipped it back to Jimmy.

Not content with failing to set the around the world flight record, Jimmie decided on an even more ambitious project. In 1933 he formed Jimmie Mattern Incorporated to help raise funds to rebuild "The Century of Progress" and plan for a new trip: a solo flight around the world. Armed with a rebuilt and modified plane, and permissions for over flights of Europe and Russia, Jimmie took off on June 3, 1933. Forty-eight hours later he reached Norway, well off course from where he was supposed to land. From Oslo he flew to Moscow, and then on to Khabarousk. On his way to Khabarousk, Jimmie lost his way and set down on the Andmir River. There some local peasants filled his airplane with tractor fuel. Jimmie took off and made it to Khabrousk. On June 14th, he took off for Nome, Alaska, however four hours from Nome, and over the vast wastes of arctic Siberia, the crude gasoline he had taken on at the Andmir River caused his engine to

seize up. Jimmie had no choice but to crash-land his plane. He flew in low and knocked the landing gear off, then he belly landed in the tundra. Jimmie spent the next couple of weeks surviving alone in the arctic. Finally he was found by Eskimos heading downriver to a settlement at the mouth of the Andiyar. They nursed Jimmie back to health, and he reached this settlement on the 5th of July. He spent several more weeks in the settlement trying to get permission to bring in a plane, so he could continue his solo flight. Finally on July 19th the Russian pilot Levanesky arrived. He and Jimmy took off, and eventually reached Nome, Alaska. From there Jimmie traveled back to Floyd Bennett Field, where his whole odyssey started.

Jimmie next turned up in Chicago, working on a contract for the Sherman Hotel, describing his adventures as a pilot in a nightly show. While there he met a Chicago showgirl named Dorothy Harvey. In 1934 Jimmie became the Aeronautical Director for the Pure Oil Company, and helped script a radio show (1935) that dramatized his life up to that point. He continued to court Dorothy, and in 1937 he became the aeronautical director for Benedum and Tree's Family of Oil Companies. On May 18th, Jimmie and Dorothy were married, and Jimmie then immediately departed to enter into a New York to Paris Air Race, which was later canceled. Jimmie went to California to be close to Lockheed, so he could get his hands on a new Lockheed 12. He was going to convert it so that he could fly around the world non-stop (he would refuel in mid-air.) The Government denied him a permit, but Jimmie was later contacted by the Russian Ambassador. Levanesky had gone missing somewhere between Point Barrow, Alaska and the North Pole. Jimmie was asked to come to Alaska and join the search. Jimmie flew many search sorties out of Point Barrow, but he and the rest of the searchers were unsuccessful in locating the lost Russian flyers.

1938 – 1939 found Jimmie working for the Lockheed Corporation, test flying the P-38. The P-38 had been killing a lot of trainee pilots, so Jimmie developed a piggy back training system. This modified the P-38 so an experienced pilot could sit in front of the trainee, and take over if anything went wrong. This procedure substantially cut down on the number of training accidents. Jimmie also developed a modified fuel system for the P-38. He test flew many different types of aircraft for Lockheed. His work with the Lockheed Corporation ended in 1946. Jimmie was tasked with being the President of Lockheed's personal pilot, but he felt that something was wrong. He had been having unusual spasms and shakes. He went to his doctor, who was concerned he had a brain tumor. This led to a trip to the Mayo Clinic where Jimmie was diagnosed with a ruptured blood vessel in his brain. Apparently the vessel had ruptured because of all the blackout stalls he had done while demonstrating the P-38. Jimmie was told that he could never fly again, for fear of aggravating the rupture.

Although Jimmie was forced to retire from flight, he never lost touch with aviation. He was instrumental in organizing the OX-5 Club of California, and helped plan and host the 1958 OX-5 Club National Convention in Los Angeles, California. Jimmie was also active in the Quiet Birdmen and the Society of Experimental Test Pilots. He and his wife became real estate brokers, and then operated the Mattern travel agency. Jimmie was

also involved in promoting aviation through the media including writing books and articles, and working as a producer for the 1960's cartoon show Space Angel. Jimmie became an avid supporter of the space program and attended the launchings of Apollo IX, XI, and XV. He also had his pilot's license carried to the moon on Apollo XI.

In 1981 Jimmie Mattern, for his contributions to aviation, was inducted into The Oklahoma Air and Space Hall of Fame. In 1988 Jimmie Mattern was to be honored by a Texas Aviation Pioneer Day in Dallas; however he passed away on December 17, 1988, just days before this event honoring his life.

Sources

James J. "Jimmie" Mattern Collection, Series I, Box 1, Folder 2, History of Aviation Collection, Special Collections Department, McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.

Carlson, Erik. "Carl G. Cromwell and Cromwell Airlines: The Dawn of Commercial Aviation in West Texas, 1928 – 1931". The West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, Vol. LXXIX October, 2003. pp 89 -105.

Mattern, James and Mattern, Dorothy. *The Diary of Jimmy Mattern – Pioneer Airman Autobiography*. Dallas, TX 1991.

Series Description

The James J. "Jimmie" Mattern Collection comprises three series of 15 boxes of material totaling 7.5 linear feet. It is composed of loose material in folders. The collection is described at the folder level. See container list for the title of individual folders.

Scope and Content Note

The James J. "Jimmie" Mattern Collection is organized into three series of material:

Series I: Documents (6 Boxes)

This material includes documents related to Mattern's personal life, his record breaking flights, his work with Lockheed Aircraft, and his involvement in aviation clubs and organizations. A copy of his autobiography is included with the material.

Series II: News Clippings (8 Boxes)

This material consists of newspaper clippings with Mattern's aviation activities, record breaking flights, personal experiences, space travel, and other general topics including World War II and the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Series III: Pictures (1 Box)

These series houses pictures of Mattern's personal life, aircraft, flying career, awards and organizations, and official Lockheed photographs of the P-38 modifications Jimmie was responsible for. There is also a small selection of negatives and slides

Provenance Statement

The James J. "Jimmie" Mattern Collection was donated to the History of Aviation Collection, McDermott Library Special Collections by Dorothy Mattern in 1989. The material processed in this collection only represents part of the donated material. Certain photographs and other items are in the custody of The Frontiers of Flight Museum located in Dallas, Texas. Contact the museum to access this part of the collection.

Literary Rights Statement

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Container list

Begins on page 5.

Jimmie Mattern: Container List

Series I: Documents

<u>Box 1</u>	<u>Titles, Dates, and Description</u>
<u>Folder</u>	
1	Jimmie Mattern Collection Notes and Inventory (1989)
2	Jimmie Mattern Biographical Material (1905 – 1988)
3	“Partial Aviation History of Col. Jimmie Mattern (USAF, RET.)” (1975)
4	Jimmie Mattern Publicity Material (1937)
5	Photocopies of Articles and Photographs (1932 – 1988)
6	Support Material for “The Diary of Jimmie Mattern, Pioneer Airman” (1932 – 1990)
7	Rescue in Siberia (1933 - 1981)
8	Jimmie Mattern’s Diary – “Lost in Siberia” (1933)
9	“The Diary of Jimmie Mattern, Pioneer Airman” (1990)
10	Jimmie Mattern Licenses (1925 – 1939)
11	Jimmie Mattern Cards and Identification (1933 – 1983)
<u>Box 2</u>	
1	Jimmie Mattern’s Work for Lockheed During World War II (1941 – 1944)
2	Jimmie Mattern’s Modification and Training Plan for the Lockheed P-38 (1942 – 1986)

3 Lord Halifax Accepts Lockheed's 1,000th Hudson Bomber on behalf of The United Kingdom (1940)

4 Jimmie Mattern Inc. Incorporation Documents (1932 – 1938)

Jimmie Mattern: Container List

Series I: Documents

Box 2 Titles, Dates, and Description

Folder

5 Miscellaneous Government Documents Related to Jimmie Mattern (1932 – 1945)

6 Jimmie Mattern Invoices and Receipts (1932 – 1937)

7 Goodyear Aeronautical Accessories Price List (1938)

8 Jimmie Mattern's Essays and Reflections (1937 – 1987)

9 Jimmie Mattern's Hand Written Personal Notes (1932 – 1966)

10 Notes for Article on Jimmie Mattern's Solo Round the World Flight (1933)

11 Commentary on Joe Crosson (The Pilot who Flew the Bodies of Will Rogers and Wiley Post back from Alaska) (1937)

12 Comments on Amelia Earheart (1933 – 1983)

13 "There I Sat on My Panic" – Book Proposal by Jimmie Mattern and Dave Showalter (1960)

14 Jimmie Mattern Army Extension Course Work – Air Attack Doctrine (1938 – 1939)

15 US Army Flight Reports Air Corps Forms 1 and 1-A (1943)

16 Award of Citation of Distinguished Wartime Service to Jimmie Mattern/Request for Award of Civilian Medal of Merit to Jimmie Mattern (1949)

17 Jimmie Mattern's Air Force Retirement Orders (1943 – 1970)

Jimmie Mattern: Container List**Series I: Documents****Box 3****Titles, Dates, and Description****Folder**

1	Reports form the U.S. Weather Bureau (1932)
2	Mattern – Griffin Around the World Flight (1932)
3	Over flight Permissions for the USSR (1932)
4	Speech Given by Jimmie Mattern in Germany (1932) and German Program Honoring Jimmie Mattern (1969)
5	50 th Anniversary of Mattern-Griffin Around the World Flight (1982)
6	Correspondence (1932)
7	Correspondence (1933)
8	Correspondence (1934 – 1936)
9	Correspondence (1937 – 1940)
10	Correspondence (1940 – 1949)
11	Correspondence (1950 – 1959)
12	Correspondence (1960 – 1979)
13	Correspondence (1980 – 1989)
14	Correspondence with Congressman Jennings Randolph (1957 – 1985)
15	Correspondence with James H. Doolittle (1985 – 1991)

- 16 Correspondence with Lockheed Aircraft (1933 – 1938)
- 17 Correspondence with the Paramount Theater, New York City (1933)

Jimmie Mattern: Container List

Series I: Documents

Box 3 Titles, Dates, and Description

Folder

- 18 Copies of Jimmie Mattern’s Correspondence (1932 – 1980)

Box 4

Folder

- 1 Correspondence with Aeronautical Equipment Firms (1933 – 1934)
- 2 Good Luck Telegrams (1933)
- 3 Telegrams (1931 – 1932)
- 4 Telegrams (1933)
- 5 Telegrams (1937 – 1938)
- 6 Telegrams (n.d.)
- 7 Contracts with Media Organization (1933 Around the World Flight) (1933)
- 8 Contract with Ed Aldrin of Standard Oil (1933 Around the World Flight) (1933)
- 9 Jimmie Mattern’s Lockheed Vega (1933 – 1977)
- 10 Jimmie Mattern’s Modification to His Lockheed Martin 12’s Fuel System (1933)

- 11 Miscellaneous Information about Jimmie Mattern's Lockheed Martin 12 (1933)
- 12 Maps of the Pacific (1933)

Jimmie Mattern: Container List

Series I: Documents

Box 4 Titles, Dates, and Description

Folder

- 13 Jimmie Mattern's Flight to Alaska (1937)
- 14 Correspondence Congratulating Jimmie Mattern on his induction to the Oklahoma Air And Space Hall of Fame (1981)
- 15 Jimmie Mattern's Induction to the Oklahoma Air and Space Hall of Fame (1981)
- 16 Transcript of Radio Interview with Jimmie Mattern (1933)
- 17 Jimmie Mattern's Radio Show (1934)
- 18 Jimmie Mattern's Involvement with the Television Show "Space Angel"
- 19 Proposal for "The Air and Space Age" Television Show (1965)

Box 5

Folder

- 1 OX-5 Club, Southern California Wing Information (1955 – 1988)
- 2 OX-5 Club Press (1957)
- 3 OX-5 Club National Convention, Los Angeles, California (1958)
- 4 OX-5 Club Awards and Commendations (1962; 1986)
- 5 OX-5 Club Historical Material (1933 – 1969)

- 6 OX-5 Club National Convention Correspondence (1957 – 1958)
- 7 Quiet Birdmen (1934 – 1936)

Jimmie Mattern: Container List

Series I: Documents

Box 5 Titles, Dates, and Description

Folder

- 8 Society of Experimental Test Pilots (1963 – 1979)
- 9 Texas Aviation Pioneer’s Day Dinner (1988)
- 10 Order of Transatlantic Solo Flyers (1938)
- 11 Miscellaneous Organizations and Awards (1911 – 1985)
- 12 Dorothy Mattern Comments about Wiley Post and Will Rodgers (1985 – 1989)
- 13 Aviation Greats (1955 – 1985)

Box 6

Folder

- 1 Covers for Mattern’s Polar Flight (1937)
- 2 Around the World Flight Covers (1934 – 1939)
- 3 Jimmie Mattern Memorabilia – Folder 1 (1928 – 1989)
- 4 Jimmie Mattern Memorabilia – Folder 2 (1928 – 1989)
- 5 NASA Mission Report – STS -1 (1981)
- 6 Astronaut Information (1965 – 1981)
- 7 Manila – Hong Kong- Taiwan (1980)

Jimmie Mattern: Container List

Series II: Newspapers and Magazines

Box 1

Titles, Dates, and Description

Folder

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Clippings: Mattern Induction into The Oklahoma Aviation Hall (1981) |
| 2 | Clippings: Jimmie Mattern Personal – Folder 1 (1930 – 1989) |
| 3 | Clippings: Jimmie Mattern Personal – Folder 2 (1930 – 1989) |
| 4 | Clippings: Jimmie Mattern Personal – Folder 3 (1930 – 1989) |
| 5 | Clippings: Jimmie Mattern’s Aviation Career (1932 – 1989) |
| 6 | Clippings: OX-5 Club (1957 – 1959) |
| 7 | Clippings: Mattern – Griffin Around the World Flight – Folder 1 (1932) |

Box 2

Folder

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Clippings: Mattern - Griffin Around the World Flight – Folder 2 (1932) |
| 2 | Clippings: Mattern – Griffin Flight to Berlin (1932) |
| 3 | Clippings: Mattern Solo Around the World Flight – Folder 1 (1933) |
| 4 | Clippings: Mattern Solo Around the World Flight – Folder 2 (1933) |

5 Clippings: Mattern Solo Around the World Flight – Folder 3 (1933)

6 Clippings: Mattern Solo Around the World Flight – Folder 4 (1933)

Jimmie Mattern: Container List

Series II: Newspapers and Magazines

Box 2 Titles, Dates, and Description

Folder

7 Clippings: Mattern Solo Around the World Flight – Folder 5 (1933)

Box 3

Folder

1 Clippings: Mattern's Entry into French Air Race (1937)

2 Clippings: Fairbanks Daily News-Miner (1937)

3 Clippings: Mattern's Polar Flight to Moscow (1937)

4 Clippings: Hunt for Russian Pilot's Lost in Arctic – Folder 1 (1937)

5 Clippings: Hunt for Russian Pilot's Lost in Arctic – Folder 2 (1937)

6 Clippings: Hunt for Russian Pilot's Lost in Arctic – Folder 3 (1937)

7 Clippings: Hunt for Russian Pilot's Lost in Arctic – Folder 4 (1937)

Box 4

Folder

- 1 Clippings: Hunt for Russian Pilot's Lost in Arctic – Folder 5 (1937)
- 2 Clippings: Hunt for Russian Pilot's Lost in Arctic – Folder 6 (1937)

Jimmie Mattern: Container List

Series II: Newspapers and Magazines

Box 4 Titles, Dates, and Description

Folder

- 3 Clippings: Other Aviators – Folder 1 (1932 – 1984)
- 4 Clippings: Other Aviators – Folder 2 (1932 – 1984)
- 5 Clippings: Other Around the World Flights (1932 – 1937)
- 6 Clippings: Oil Industry (1937 – 1981)
- 7 Clippings: Lockheed's Gift of 1,000th Hudson Bomber to the United Kingdom (1941)
- 8 Clippings: Aviation History – Folder 1 (1937 – 1989)
- 9 Clippings: Aviation History – Folder 2 (1937 – 1989)

Box 5

Folder

- 1 Clippings: Chicago Daily Tribune (June 26, 1906)
- 2 Clippings: "Guinea Gold" (1943 – 1944)
- 3 Clippings: Foreign Newspaper Front Pages (1932 – 1943)
- 4 Clippings: Australia in World War II (1944)
- 5 Clippings: Apollo IX (1968 – 1969)

- 6 Clippings: Apollo XI (1969)
7 Clippings: Apollo XV (1971)

Jimmie Mattern: Container List

Series II: Newspapers and Magazines

Box 6 Titles, Dates, and Description

Folder

- 1 Clippings: Miscellaneous Space Exploration (1959 – 1989)
2 Clippings: Space Magazines (1965 – 1971)
3 Clippings: Jimmie Mattern meets with Astronauts (1962 – 1985)

Box 7

Folder

- 1 Clippings: Miscellaneous Front Pages (1946 – 1989)

Box 8

Folder

- 1 Clippings: Kennedy Assassination (1963)
2 Clippings: World War II (1939 – 1945)

Jimmie Mattern: Container List

Series III: Photographs

<u>Box 1</u>	<u>Titles, Dates, and Description</u>
1	Photographs: Jimmie Mattern – Folder 1 (1932 – 1989)
2	Photographs: Jimmie Mattern – Folder 2 (1932 – 1989)
3	Photographs: Jimmie Mattern in Alaska (1933 – 1935)
4	Photographs: “The Texan” (1937)
5	Photographs: People (1931 – 1981)
6	Photographs: Aircraft (1932 – 1981)
7	Photographs: P-38 Gas Tank Modification, Designed by Jimmie Mattern (1944 – 1947)
8	Photographs: USS Enterprise CVA(N) 67 (1966)
9	Color Negatives (1932 – 1981)
10	Black and White Negative (1932 – 1981)
11	35 mm Slides (1985)
12	Photographs: Miscellaneous (1934 – 1989)