

Treasure hunt

Boeing archives are a growing repository of a fascinating history

By Diane Stratman



As an archivist for Boeing in Southern California, Pat McGinnis helps find and safeguard the company's historical treasures. In this *Frontiers* series that profiles employees talking about their job, McGinnis shares what it's like to have a front-row seat to the fascinating legacy of Boeing and its heritage companies. PHOTO: BOEING

I have one of the most intriguing jobs at Boeing. I collect and catalog historical records. Specifically, I maintain the Boeing Historical Archives, a repository for selected company records that have particular historical significance.

Records of interest include printed and electronic files of engineering documents, correspondence, technical papers, maps, photographs and negatives, films and video advertising.

One of the most interesting items I've located is the boyhood journal of Donald W. Douglas Sr. The journal revealed that Douglas, at age 16, convinced his mother to let him attend a Wright brothers' demo flight in 1908. The journal had clippings from aviation magazines from that time, as well as handwritten sketches and notes for designs Douglas later created.

Many view this journal as the beginning of the Douglas Aircraft Company! It has been preserved and is now on display at the Boeing Corporate Offices in Chicago.

I've also located original photo negatives of one of Marilyn Monroe's earliest modeling shoots, in a Douglas DC-6, as well as an original negative of one of the leading ladies from Hollywood of

the 1930s—Olivia de Havilland—in a C-53 aircraft, a military version of the DC-3. And in a crate in Downey, Calif., I found a hatch from an Apollo test spacecraft.

My career as an archivist began in the mid-1990s. I worked in the Marketing department at McDonnell Douglas. As time allowed, I developed an avid interest in the archive files. I was fascinated—sometimes until 10 or 11 at night—by the endless documents and photos that told a great story about a great company. My curiosity gradually evolved into a part-time component of my job.

Following the merger with Boeing in 1997, part time turned into full time. Gradually, the archives grew to include not only Douglas Aircraft but North American Rockwell's space activities, Hughes and the McDonnell Douglas space activities in Southern California.

From the start of my career, the size of the archives has doubled—and so has my passion for not only preserving and protecting the fascinating history of Boeing but for making information and objects of historical significance available for business, legal and educational use. ■

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