Special Collections and University Archives

Manuscript Group 144
Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson Collection

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Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson Collection, Manuscript Group 144
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Special Collections and University Archives
4 boxes; 4 linear feet

Biographical Information

Dr. Patricia (Patty) Consolatrix Hilliard Robertson (March 12, 1963 – May 24, 2001) was born in Indiana, Pennsylvania, and she grew up in Homer City, Pennsylvania in Indiana County. She extensively traveled abroad at an early age, and she was a popular student at Homer Center High School, graduating in 1980. In 1985, Patricia Hilliard earned her undergraduate degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). She went onto earn her medical degree from the Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1989. Her father, Harold Cooper Hilliard (October 27, 1927 – August 5, 1999) was born in Homer City, and he was in the international construction business. Some of her childhood was spent in Indonesia, where her father Harold Hilliard had met her mother Ilsa Trouda Wilson Hilliard.

See the permanent online exhibit dedicated to IUP's Astronaut: Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson, Class of 1985.

Dr. Patricia Hilliard was an avid pilot who accumulated more than 1,500 hours of flight time. She was a multiengine-rated flight instructor and also performed aerobatics. In 1995, Dr. Hilliard left Erie, Pennsylvania, where she was working for a family pediatrics practice, to pursue a fellowship in space medicine at the University of Texas and the Johnson Space Center in Houston. In 1998, NASA selected her for astronaut candidate training. Dr. Hilliard underwent intensive scientific training, and learned water and wilderness survival techniques. In Houston, Texas, she met and married pilot Scott Robertson.

Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson, a NASA astronaut and physician, passed away on Thursday, May 24, 2001, after sustaining injuries when her experimental plane crashed in in Manvel, Texas. She was 38 years old. Dr. Robertson was serving as a support astronaut for crew members presently on board the International Space Station. She was scheduled to take off on a shuttle mission the following year. Dr. Robertson was a passenger in a single-engine experimental plane owned and flown by Roy Mack Paul Adams, when the accident occurred at Wolfe Air Park in Manvel, Texas, about 20 miles south of Houston. According to a preliminary report by the Federal Aviation Administration, the plane crashed as Adams and Dr. Robertson were practicing landings.

It was announced on December 6, 2023, that Northrup Grumman was naming NG-20 Cygnus spacecraft the S.S. Patricia “Patty” Hilliard Robertson, for more information, see: Meet NG-20: the S.S. Patrica "Patty" Hilliard Robertson - YouTube

Scope and Content
This collection dates from 1985 to 2004 with the bulk of information dating from 2001. The collection contains 3 boxes and a permanent display. Series I documents the professional career of Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson, Series II contains biographical materials related to her education and family, and Series III lists items on permanent exhibit in the IUP Libraries (IUP Special Collections & University Archives).

In addition to personal and family materials, the collection contains a biographical sketch and scrapbook of Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson that documents her professional experience, including Mission Specialist as a member of the NASA astronaut corps. News and media releases of Dr. Robertson's death and information related to the dedication of "Patty's Memory Room" scrapbook that was compiled by her friends at NASA are included.

The collection also contains media about Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson including two VHS tapes, DVDs and three CDs celebrating her life and accomplishments. Visit the digital exhibit about IUP's Astronaut: Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson, Class of 1985. This permanent online includes several videos viewable through Windows Media Player.

Videos recorded at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas:

Movie 1: Simulation of Exercise in Space
Movie 2: Simulation of Exercise in Space
Movie 3: Simulation of Exercise in Space
Movie 4: Simulation of Exercise in Space
Movie 5: Simulation of Exercise in Space
Movie 6: Press Conference
Movie 7: The Vomit Comet

Provenance
The contents of the Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson Collection was donated by her mother Ilse Hilliard.

Restrictions
This collection is open for research.

Property rights reside with Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Special Collections and University Archives. Literary rights are retained by the creators of the records and their heirs. For permissions to reproduce or publish, please contact the coordinator of the University Archives and Special Collections.

Administrative Information
This collection was processed by the IUP Special Collections and University Archives.

Container List

Series I: Professional Career
Box 1 (14 folders) NASA

1. Biographical sketch of Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson, May 2001
2. Patricia Hilliard Robertson Special Exhibition, Draft of News Release, Exhibit item
3. NASA News Release, May 25, 2001. Indiana Gazette Article, February 8, 2003.
4. Selection & Training of Astronauts Information from NASA website, October 13, 2001.
5. Correspondence from Jordi Elvira to Phil Zorich, January 24, 2004.
6. Invitation Cards to Patty's "Memory Room," October 27, 2002.
7. Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson Tribute, United Space Alliance, May 29, 2001. 2 VHS tapes and 1 DVD
8. Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson – A Celebration of Life, 2001. VHS and DVD
9. Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson videos used in the IUP online exhibit, (3) CD-Roms
10. Patricia Hilliard Robertson photographs added to the Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson Scrapbook given to her mother Ilse Hillard with remembrances compiled by her friends and co-workers from the Johnson Space Center at Houston, Texas in June 2001. (1) CD-Rom
11. CD-Rom of images from the Johnson Space Center with Dr. Robertson.
12. A 12" flywheel from a piece of equipment on the International Space Station called the Interim Resistance Exercise Device (IRED). Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson worked with the Johnson Space Center Exercise Laboratory and Astronaut Strength, Conditioning & Rehabilitation group to develop and test this hardware. This flywheel was used on the International Space Station and it is signed by a group of colleagues with worked with Dr. Robertson to design and engineer this piece of equipment.
13. Certificate of Authenticity for silver STS-123 medallion flown on the United States Space Shuttle Endeavor, which launched on March 11, 2008, from launch pad 39A at Kennedy Space Center, Florida
14. Patricia Hilliard Robertson: Newspaper Articles, Press Releases, Tributes, and Websites, including information about the Northrop Grumman NG-20 Cygnus spacecraft being named the S.S. Patricia "Patty" Hilliard Robertson, which was announced on December 6, 2023, and launched in January 2024.

Series II: Biographical Material
Box 2 Personal Materials (3 items)

1. 1989 Medical Degree from the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania (now the Drexel University College of Medicine)
2. Wedding album of Patricia Hilliard and first husband Greg Gordon, September 19, 1992 with additional photographs, marriage license, and wedding program
3. 2000 Photograph from the IUP Distinguished Alumni Award Banquet (framed)

Series II: Biographical Material
Box 3 Personal Materials (1 folder)

1. Memory Book for Harold Cooper Hilliard (October 27, 1927-August 5, 1999) created by his daughter Patricia Hilliard Robertson for his memorial service on August 8, 1999

Series II: Biographical Material
Box 4 Personal Materials (4 items)

1. Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson Scrapbook (on display) – collection of remembrances and photographs compiled by her friends and co-workers from the Johnson Space Center at Houston, Texas in June 2001. The scrapbook contains

photographs and videos including an interview with her during a NASA press conference.
2. NASA flight suit worn by Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson (on display)
3. Photographs from the 2000 IUP Distinguished Alumni Banquet with University President Lawrence Pettit.
4. Memory Boards with messages written by her friends, fellow astronauts, and co-workers (used for displays)

Series III: Permanent Exhibit (4 items) located in 302 Stapleton Library
The following items are on permanent display in the IUP Libraries' Special Collections & University Archives:

1. American flag (framed) that was taken to the International Space Station and given to Ilse Hilliard in 2001. A certificate accompanying the flag was signed by the crew of the USS Endeavor who worked closely with Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson.
2. Videos recorded at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas:
   Movie 1: Simulation of Exercise in Space
   Movie 2: Simulation of Exercise in Space
   Movie 3: Simulation of Exercise in Space
   Movie 4: Simulation of Exercise in Space
   Movie 5: Simulation of Exercise in Space
   Movie 6: Press Conference
   Movie 7: The Vomit Comet