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Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives

Hattie Meyers Junkin Papers - Newspaper and Journal Articles: General

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October

[[image]]

Soaring above the escalators at the entrance to the Spacearium (planetarium), a Lockheed F-104A Starfighter

the machine guns on an F-86 jet fighter on a Korean airstrip.

The little boy, oblivious to the clamor around him, senses the snug fit of the pressure suit as he grips the controls of a gleaming spacecraft.

Fascination with flight—its past, present and future—that's the key to the extraordinary attraction of the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

Its dizzying panorama of spacecraft and biplanes, hot-air balloons and helicopters, jet fighters, gliders and missiles is a technological tribute to the history of aviation. But, more important, it is a buoyant celebration of America's love affair with things that fly. Drawing 800,000 visitors a month since its opening in July 1976, the museum bubbles with the sounds of people plainly enjoying themselves.

Within its glass, marble and gleaming finished-steel are puppet shows, electronic gadgetry, a vertigo-inducing film about flight (projected on a five-story screen), and the air machines themselves. Nowhere else in the world are so many famous aircraft and spacecraft gathered in one place. In a few hours, you can move through two centuries of flight history, from a re-creation of the Montgolfier brothers' balloon, which sailed over Paris in November 1783, to photo close-ups of Mars taken by Viking 1 in 1976.

Entering the main hall of the two-block-long building, you see, suspended from the high ceiling, the delicate handcrafted wire and wood airplane in which the Wright brothers first flew. Soaring above it is Charles Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis*, with the curious look of old pewter about it. Not far below is John Glenn's tiny Mercury spacecraft, about the size of a Volkswagen and still bearing the scorch marks of its re-entry into earth's atmo-

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