

HOWARD C. KNOTTS COLLECTION

PROCESSED BY
KAREN L. GRAFF
OCTOBER, 1988

HOWARD C. KNOTTS BIOGRAPHY

Howard Clayton Knotts was born in Girard, Illinois on August 25, 1895 to Edward C. and Elizabeth R. Knotts. The family moved to Carlinville, Illinois in 1902 when Edward became the Macoupin County State's Attorney.

An only child, Howard grew up in an atmosphere of small-town affluence and prestige. The family was very close-knit and Edward hoped that his son would follow in his footsteps as a lawyer, perhaps even joining him in practice. Howard attended Carlinville schools, including Blackburn College, before going on to study at Knox College in Galesburg and Harvard University.

By the time he enrolled in Harvard Law School, the United States was in the midst of World War I and Howard felt obligated to join the fighting. His parents, anxious to protect their only son and wanting him to continue his education, yet also wanting to do their "patriotic duty", urged him to follow his conscience. He tried to enlist in various branches of the service, but was turned down because of a minor medical problem. The problem was corrected during the summer of 1917 and by September he had enlisted in the United States Aviation Corps.

Knotts began his basic training at Fort Wood, New York and was then sent to Toronto, Canada to train with the Royal Flying Corps. From Canada he was sent to Hicks Field in Texas before going overseas to England in March, 1918 with the 47th Aero Squadron. Although his actual flying career was short, he was credited with shooting down eight German planes, becoming one of the American "aces" of the war. In an encounter with the enemy on October 14, 1918 he was shot down behind German lines and held prisoner in a POW camp at Poucet, Belgium. Freedom came on November 14 when the Germans, forced to retreat before Allied forces, abandoned the camp and prisoners. Knotts was hospitalized for several months in Belgium, recuperating from wounds and illnesses contracted by his stay in the POW camp. He returned to the United States in 1919 aboard the cruiser Louisville. For his efforts in the war, Knotts was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by the United States and the Distinguished Flying Cross by Great Britain, which was personally given to him by HRH Edward, Prince of Wales.

After his return home, Knotts traveled around the country for a time speaking about his experiences in the Aviation Corps and as a prisoner of war. He returned to Harvard University to resume his interrupted law studies, receiving his degree in 1921. After being admitted to the Illinois Bar, Knotts returned to Springfield and fulfilled his father's dream of going into practice with his son. In June of 1921 Howard married Charlotte Ann Sterling, the daughter of John Sterling, the United States Representative from Illinois. The young couple became the parents of Howard, Junior and Elizabeth Ann within a few years of their marriage.

Knotts' love of flying carried over into his law practice and he specialized in aeronautical law and commerce commission cases. He was co-author of the Illinois aeronautics law code which enabled the establishment of the Illinois Aeronautics Commission. The Illinois code was adopted by the American Bar Association and became the basis for most of the Federal Aeronautics law code. Knotts also served as the editor of The Journal of Air Law of Northwestern University, chairman of the national aeronautics commission of the American Legion and as general counsel of the National Aeronautics Association. Closer to home, he chaired the aviation committee of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce and was aviation supervisor for the Illinois Commerce

Commission. Knotts was also instrumental in helping to establish and improve the old Southwest Airport, Springfield's first commercial airport.

Howard C. Knotts died at his residence at 1303 South Sixth Street on November 23, 1942. He died at 47 from a heart attack, although his health had suffered through the years as a result of his war experiences. At the time of his death, he was a partner of Hugh Dobbs and Jerome K. Finkle in the law firm of Knotts and Dobbs. The Howard C. Knotts public reception room at Capital Airport was dedicated in his memory in 1984 to honor an American war hero and contributor to civil aeronautics.

HOWARD C. KNOTTS COLLECTION
SCOPE-CONTENTS

The Howard C. Knotts Collection primarily covers the period of Knotts' life from 1915 to 1921, with a few materials relating to his work in aviation law and his death in 1942. The majority of materials in the collection focus on his military experiences in World War I and the beginning of his career in aviation law.

The collection includes photographs of Knotts' training camps in New York, Texas and England, friends, World War I airplanes and air bases, decoration ceremony with the Prince of Wales; correspondence between Knotts and his parents, 1915-1921; correspondence relating to the creation of the Air Force as a separate branch of the U.S. armed services; family papers and passports; fragments of speeches; type-written summaries, newspaper accounts and excerpts from published accounts of Knotts' war-time experiences as an ace pilot and a prisoner of war; newspaper clippings relating to Knotts' career in civil aviation law, his wedding announcements, and obituary notice; letters, news releases, programs and speech by Malden Jones relating to the dedication of the Howard C. Knotts Room at Capital Airport.

Pamphlet folders contain a pilot's log book for the 27th Aero Squadron, Royal Air Force training transfer card detailing training completed in flying and gunnery, and a map of northwest Europe in 1915. A spiral-bound booklet, Faces of Love by Elizabeth Knotts Dixon, gives the history of the Sterling and Knotts families.

HOWARD C. KNOTTS MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

<u>FOLDER #</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>CONTENTS</u>
1	Aviation--Springfield, Illinois	Newspaper articles on aviation in Springfield and the visit of Douglas "Wrong Way" Corrigan.
2	Capital Airport, Spfld., Ill.--Knotts Room	Letters, news bulletins, programs, invitation and speech delivered by Malden Jones at the dedication of a memorial plaque and public reception room at Capitol Airport.
3	Civil aviation	Photocopied chapters from <u>Balloons To Jets</u> by Howard L. Scamerhorn (Regne, 1957) mentioning Howard Knotts' military career and subsequent work in pioneering civil aviation laws.
4	Civil aviation--Fred Fagg	Newspaper clipping and <u>Aviation News</u> bulletin about Fred Fagg, former professor at Northwestern University and Director of U.S. Bureau of Air Commerce.
5	Correspondence--About Howard Knotts	Letters from a former employee to Knotts' daughter reminiscing about Knotts and his law office.
6A-J	Correspondence A - 1915-1916 B - 1917 (3/1917-5/1917) C - 1917 (9/1917-12/1917) D - 1918 (1/1918-9/1918) E - 1918 (10/1918) F - 1918 (11/1918-12/1918) G - 1919 (1/1919) H - 1919 (2/1919-5/1919) I - 1920 J-1921	Correspondence between Howard C. Knotts and his parents, Elizabeth and Edward Knotts. Includes letters detailing his military career in WW I from training to capture by Germans to release from service.
7	Edward C. Knotts	Newspaper obituary of Edward C. Knotts, father of Howard C. Knotts.
8	Family papers and passports	Passports of Howard C. Knotts, Elizabeth Ann Knotts, vaccination certificate for Elizabeth Ann Knotts.
9	Law career	Membership certificate of the Holmes Law Club of Harvard University, photocopied article on Knotts' military career and aeronautics law work from the <u>National Aeronautics</u> , December, 1937.

<u>FOLDER #</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>CONTENTS</u>
10	Lincoln notes	Photocopies of notes written by Abraham Lincoln.
11	Obituary	Newspaper obituaries of Howard C. Knotts, letter of condolence from Gill Robb Wilson to Charlotte Knotts.
12	Photographs--Aeronautic celebrities	Photographs of well-known celebrities in aviation including Amelia Earhart, Wiley Post and Douglas "Wrong Way" Corrigan.
13	Photographs--Howard C. Knotts	Photographs of Howard C. Knotts, ca. 1930's (?)
14A-K	Photographs--WW I	Photographs of training camps and air bases, troop ships, fellow officers and friends, various types of airplanes and wreckage of crashed planes.
15A-C	Photographs--WW I--Airplanes	Photographs of various types of American, French and British airplanes.
16	Photographs--WW I--Prince of Wales	Photographs of Howard C. Knotts receiving Britain's Distinguished Flying Cross from Edward, Prince of Wales, letter to Howard Knotts from Godfrey Thomas, Edward's private secretary.
17	Speeches	Speech given at Georgetown, Illinois for joint armistice services, November 6, 1932, miscellaneous typewritten poem and notes.
18	U.S. Air Force Association	Letters and notes from William Mitchell and Eddie Rickenbacker regarding the formation of the U.S. Air Force Association for the creation of a separate air force in the armed services.
19	Wedding	Newspaper articles about the engagement and wedding of Charlotte Sterling and Howard C. Knotts, marriage service booklet included.
20	Wilson, Woodrow	Extra edition of the Washington, D.C. <u>Sunday Star</u> for February 3, 1924 announcing the death of Woodrow Wilson.
21A-C	WW I--Experiences	Typewritten summaries, newspaper articles, and excerpts from published accounts of Howard C. Knotts' war-time experiences as an ace pilot and German prisoner of war.

FOLDER #

TITLE

CONTENTS

22

WW I--Experiences--Citations

Citations issued to Howard C. Knotts for distinguished service during WW I, including the Distinguished **Ser-vice** Cross for extraordinary heroism; photographs of Howard Knotts receiving the DFC from General William Mitchell

PAMPHLET FOLDERS

BV-1

Log Book

Pilot's flying log book for the 17th Aero-Squadron 11/1917-10/1918. Record of flying time and training at Hicks Field in Texas and fields in Liverpool, Winchester and South Carlton, England.

BV-2

Royal Air Force Training Transfer Card

Record of training and tests in flying and gunnery 6/8/1918-7/27/1918.

BV-3

Map of Northwest Europe

Map of Belgium and France, 1915.

BV-4

Faces of Love

Spiral-bound volume, Faces of Love, by Elizabeth K(notts) Dixon. Family history of the Sterling and Knotts families.

BV-5-16
(Vol. 1-12)

The Journal of Air Law *Curtis's office*

Journal on civil aviation published and edited by the law schools of Northwestern University, University of Southern California and Washington University in conjunction with the Air Law Institute.

Located on bookshelves in SVC office.