

The Flying Housewife



Geraldine Mock prior to taking off on her around-the-world flight

On April 17, 1964, Geraldine “Jerrie” Mock, an unassuming housewife from Columbus, Ohio, did what no other women had ever done – completed a solo flight around the world. Mock made the 23,103-mile flight in 29 days 11 hours 59 minutes, landing at Port Columbus Airport, Ohio. Even more astounding, this petite pilot, the mother of a 17-, 16-, and 4-year, undertook the flight in a 1953 Cessna 180 single-engine monoplane called the *Spirit of Columbus*.

In 1931, five-year old Jerrie Mock made her first flight in a Ford Trimotor. Although in the air for only about 15 minutes, she loved flying. In pursuit of her interest, she studied aeronautical engineering at Ohio State University. In 1945, putting her flying ambition on hold, she married Russell Mock and began a family. She began flying lessons in 1956 and earned her private pilot certificate in 1958. By 1962, she had accumulated over 700 flight hours, but had no over-water experience.

Ready for a new adventure, Mock’s husband suggested, somewhat as a joke, that she fly around the world. She loved the idea and began flight planning in 1962. After over 15 months of preparation in which she had a new 225 h.p. engine installed in her plane, as well as twin radio direction finders, dual short-range radios, a long-range radio, and a new compass. Two ferry tanks replaced the passenger seats inside the cabin, bringing the total fuel on board to 178 gallons, giving her an endurance of 25 hours and a range of 2400 nautical miles.

Mock departed Ohio on March 19, 1964. The trip was not without its perils. She flew through poor weather, suffered brake failure, and radio transmission problems as she flew to Bermuda, the Azores, northern Africa, through the Middle East, India, the islands of Guam, Wake, Hawaii and finally to Oakland, California before returning to Columbus, Ohio.

Jerrie Mock went on to set a number of other flight records, such as the first woman to fly across both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and fastest speed over the following recognized courses: Guadalcanal to Rabaul; Tarawa to Guadalcanal; Columbus to San Juan; Honolulu to Tarawa; San Juan to Columbus; and Columbus to San Juan to Columbus. She has received numerous awards for her aviation achievement. President L.B. Johnson awarded her the Federal Aviation Agency Gold Medal for Distinguished Service Award. In addition she has also received the FAI Louis Blériot Silver Medal, the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Distinguished Service Award, and the Glenn H. Curtiss Silver Medal for Achievement.



President Lyndon Johnson presents
Mock with FAA's gold medal

After her around-the-world flight, when asked by a reporter why she undertook the flight, she simply answered, "I did it to give confidence to the little pilot, who is being left in the jetstream of the space age."