

Women in Control Newsletter

April 2000

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1. Editor's Note

Hello, Everyone! I hope all of you are doing well. Spring is almost here! Specially here, in south Louisiana, we have great spring weather now. Flowers blooming everywhere, children riding bikes on the sidewalks, university students taking a breather after the midterms ... This issue has several interesting and important items. Please read on. Please let us know your summer travel plans - if some members of our group will travel to various parts of the world, it will be nice to arrange visits with other members who live and work in those places.

Best regards to all of you.

Sincerely,

Fahmida Chowdhury

2. Open Position: WiC Newsletter Editor

We are looking for a new Editor for this newsletter. Please volunteer or nominate ... send email to fchowdh@louisiana.edu. I would be very glad to recommend someone from outside the USA for this position: everything is done electronically, so physical location is not important. Please consider volunteering for this job. I assure you, it will be a rewarding experience. It definitely has been for me. Thank you all.

3. Article about Women Aviators

The following article was sent by Tariq Samad of Honeywell. Samad got it from Rosa Weber, and Weber obtained permission to post it in this newsletter from the author of the article. It was written by the Chapter Vice-chair of the San Diego Ninety-Nine's Inc. I hope you will enjoy this article.

WOMEN IN AVIATION

MADELEINE SOPHIE BLANCHARD of France proved women could fly when she made a solo balloon flight in 1805.

MARY MYERS became the first American woman aviator in 1886. No, airplanes weren't invented yet but she set a world altitude record when she soared 4 miles above Franklin, Pennsylvania (without oxygen) in a balloon.

The WRIGHT BROTHERS on December 17, 1903, flew the first powered flight. They said: When the world speaks of the Wrights, they must include their sister Catherine for she encouraged them and helped them with money, and sewed the fabric for the wings on her sewing machine.

In 1910 the ball went back to France's court. Baroness RAYMONDE DE LAROCHE became the first woman in the world to earn a pilot's license. Flying was ideal for women, she told reporters, it does not rely so much on strength as on physical and mental coordination. She was injured severely only four months later when a male pilot did the inexcusable act of darting in front of her plane, catching her machine in his turbulent prop wash and causing her to crash. Within two years she was recovered and racing again. She won a prestigious award and then was killed when a plane in which she was a passenger crashed.

In 1911 the first Englishwoman HILDA HEWITT was licensed, then MELLIE BEESE in Germany and HELENE DUTREAU in Belgium. Though there were not many men flying then either, they were jealous of the privilege and Mellie Beese succeeded despite men who twice sabotaged her plane.

In this country there were women who flew but never bothered to become licensed. The first woman to solo, BLANCHE SCOTT, did so in 1910. Then BESSICA RAICHE of Wisconsin, who used to wear bloomers, drive an automobile and excel in sports. With her husband she built an airplane, then got in it and taught herself to fly. She didn't stick with it though, instead, she later became a physician.

The most celebrated of America's pioneer women fliers was HARRIET QUIMBY, a young writer in New York, who as she watched a handsome young pilot in only the second airshow to be performed in this country, determined that...she could do that. On August 1, 1911 she qualified for the first license given an American woman. In 1912 she traveled to England to become the first woman to fly the English channel. It had been flown two years before by a Frenchman, Louis Bleriot, from France to England, a feat that forever changed the military thinking of the world. War would not again be won by strength of a mighty navy upon the seas. Harriet Quimby rightly assumed her flight would earn headlines and she would come back to America a celebrity, but as fate would have it, an iceberg in the North Atlantic created a more newsworthy incident on the same day, April 16, 1912.

A tragic accident took her life in September of that year. The beautiful white Bleriot model airplane she had brought back from France, we now know, had a design flaw that caused the tail to lift as it gained speed in a downward attitude. All was well while sufficient weight was in the seat behind, but sand bags had been removed to allow the 200 lb. manager of the show to go for a ride. He shifted his position as Harriet began the landing descent causing the tail to flip up suddenly and throw him out. This caused the plane to turn completely upside down and she too, hurtled out and down into the bay of the Boston Harbor. Harriet Quimby was commemorated on a US Airmail stamp a few years back.

The second female license went to Harriet Quimby's good friend, MATHILDE MOISANT, sister of pilot Johnny Moisant, who had attracted Harriet Quimby's attention in the airshow. Johnny was a handsome and flamboyant young man, fearless, but lacking the judgment it takes to become an old pilot. He was killed in an airshow in New Orleans in December of that year before he could give Harriet the lessons he had promised. The International Airport in New Orleans was named for him.

Mathilde Moisant was a good student and earned her license only a few weeks after Harriet Quimby with a total of only 32 minutes air time. The two girls were made part of the Moisant International Aviators and went very shortly after being licensed with the group to Mexico City where they thrilled audiences, many of who had never seen an aircraft before, much less a beautiful woman pilot flying one. In my archival research I found newspaper stories telling of their flying experiences in Mexico and learned that the girls often outflew the men. One day when the Governor of Mexico did not attend the meet, Mathilde flew over the Palace and dropped a bouquet of flowers only feet from where he sat on the verandah. The next day he came to the show, presented her with a bouquet and a note saying it was a good thing the flowers had not been a bomb, so accurate was her aim. Mathilde was a naturally gifted and extremely daring flyer, but after Harriet's death and a couple of serious crashes caused by unavoidable situations not her fault, she cut her flying career short and lived out the remaining 64 years of her life in good health in Los Angeles.

By now there were more and more women determined to fly: ALYS McKEY, was the first woman to fly in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and all of Canada. She flew to 2900 altitude in 1913 to set a record.

RUTH LAW soloed one month after seeing Harriet Quimby plummet to her death in Boston Harbor and was licensed in 1912. She enjoyed one of the longest and most colorful flying careers of her day. In 1916 she set three new records with a non-stop cross country flight of 590 miles between Chicago and Cornell, NY, where a young Army Lt., Hap Arnold, changed her planes spark plugs before she flew on to New York City.

Crowds attending the 1915-16 exposition in Balboa park, San Diego, were thrilled by the flying and daring loop-the-loops done by a beautiful young woman pilot, KATHERINE STINSON. Sometimes she performed at night with magnesium flares on the wing tips. She was popular around the US, Canada and especially popular in Japan and China. There, on her first appearance in Tokyo 25,000 people were thrilled by her acrobatics, her beauty and flying skills, but she was especially sensational in a society whose customs strictly restricted the activities of women. Her little sister, MARJORIE STINSON encouraged by her sister's success, entered the Wright Flying School and soon joined Katherine in exhibition flights. In 1915 she, her mother and sister Katherine opened the Stinson Flying School which made a major contribution in WWI, training at full capacity through 1918.

BERNETTA MILLER served with the Womens Overseas Service League in WWI and was awarded a Croix de Guerre by the French government.

Into the twenties more and more women were setting records for distance, altitude and endurance. Two titled British women made extraordinary flights over up and down continents where planes had never been seen. One of them, LADY MARY HEATH, flew from the Cape of Good Hope to Cairo, equipped, she said, with a bible, a shotgun, 2 tennis rackets, 6 tea gowns, and a fur coat. Its so safe, she said, that a woman can fly across Africa in a frock and keep her nose powdered all the way.

Against staggering odds a black woman by the name of BESSIE COLEMAN gained renown in aviation. One of thirteen children, she had picked cotton (this claim is not supported with fact - laundress, waitress, manicurist and money from a black newspaper publisher are recorded sources of funds) to earn money for school. As a black and a woman, Bessie found the doors locked to flying schools. So she studied French and sailed for Paris to learn to fly. She returned in 1921, the worlds first licensed black pilot. She was popular after her return to this country, flew in airshows, filled halls when she made speaking engagements and captured the front pages of black community newspapers. She fell to her death at an airshow in 1926.

Back in the US, ELINOR SMITH in 1926 soloed at 15 and was licensed a year later. She made international news at 17 when she flew under the four East River bridges in NY. At 18 she set two world altitude records and was named Best Woman Pilot when she was only 19. In 1929 with female pilot BOBBI TROUT, they set an endurance record with mid-air refueling . . . stayed aloft 42 hours. Bobbi now 93 and living in Carlsbad, set new records as fast as they were broken and once remained aloft 5 days.

RUTH ELDER in 1927 attempted to fly the great Polar Route to Europe in a seaplane. She failed, but not before logging more than 2,600 miles, setting a new over-water record.

AMELIA EARHART: If asked who was the most famous woman pilot is people would most likely refer to her. Why? She came into the public eye in 1928 when she was invited to fly across the Atlantic in a three-engined aircraft bought by a wealthy woman who wanted to be the first American girl to make the trip. Her family objected and she agreed to withdraw on condition that an American girl of the right image be found to take her place. Publisher George Putnam suggested a young social worker who flies. Though she was a passenger and never touched the controls, Amelia achieved fame for being the first woman to fly the Atlantic and this galvanized womens interest in aviation. She subsequently married Putnam and had his money and desire for success to help her with notable firsts. She flew the Atlantic solo in 1932, was the first woman to fly from Hawaii to the US, and the first to fly from Mexico City to the US (Newark). She determined to become the first woman to fly around the world. A twin-engine Lockheed Electra was outfitted and she set out from Oakland for Hawaii, the first stop. On take-off from Hawaii she experienced difficulty, caused damage to her plane, and had to have it returned to Oakland for repair. Anxious to continue, the route was changed and she set out on an easterly course. Her last stop was at Lae, New Guinea, where she had some repairs made and from there continued to Howland Island as her destination. Faulty radio equipment prevented her from receiving the transmissions from the Naval base and the vessels in the area attempting to track her. They could hear her but she did not respond. Research continues still in an effort to solve the 60+ year-old mystery of the disappearance of the plane carrying the famous lady and her navigator, Fred Noonan.

In 1929 a womens Air Derby was arranged to gain publicity for a mens transcontinental air race to be flown from Santa Monica to Cleveland. Will Rogers, the celebrity announcer, called the women POWDER PUFF PILOTS and 20 women pilots entered, including Amelia Earhart, Pancho Barnes, Germanys top female pilot Thea Rasche, and one from Austria. The winner was LOUISE THADEN* who went on to set records, win the Bendix Air Race, earn a prestigious Harmon trophy as leading woman pilot of 1936.

*Louise Thadens plane was restored and flown over the original Powder Puff race route in 1989. The plane is now owned by Will Allen of La Jolla and kept in his hangar at Gillespie Field. In this race, too, women paid for the competitive spirit of some men - - - sabotage, tampering, sand in gas tanks, etc. Public reaction was predictable: fatalities in mens racing were seen as just something that happened but in womens racing they were signs of incompetence. There were attempts to have the race cancelled which the race committee rejected. 15 of the 20 women got to Cleveland.

After the derby was talk of forming an organization for the mutual support and advancement of women pilots. Letters were sent to the 117 licensed female pilots in the US, inviting them to join. On November 2, 1929 a small group met in a hangar at Curtiss Field, Valley Stream, NY. Louise Thaden was elected secretary. Response came in from all over and by 1931 Amelia Earhart was elected first president, the name was declared to be THE NINETY-NINES, the number who responded to the invitation to join.

They stated their mission would be to:

- * Promote world fellowship through flight
- * Provide networking and scholarship opportunities for women, and aviation education in the community
- * Preserve the unique history of women in aviation

The organization has been international since the beginning and members now number over 6,000 in chapters throughout the US and in nine other countries.

Through the thirties women went on flying, setting records and earning honors. LAURA INGALLS made a record-setting 17,000 mile flight to and a round South America, JEAN BATTEN crossed the South Atlantic from Africa to Brazil, BERYL MARKHAM became first woman to fly the North Atlantic east to west, LOUISE THADEN was the first woman to win the famous Bendix Air Race, and HANNA REITSCH was first woman to pilot a helicopter.

WWII: NANCY LOVE was authorized by the Army Air Force Transport Command to mobilize the Womens Auxillary Ferry Service (WAFS) in 1942. Telegrams were sent to 200 women pilots stating requirements and soon 27 were ready for orders. This organization later merged with the Womens Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) with Nancy Love directing the Air Transport Command. At the time the WAFS were disbanded. In 1944 there were 123 women pilots in this elite corps and men had to admit the aircraft didn't know a woman was flying. The Command begged to keep their women pilots who were ferrying 70% of the single and twin engine fighters, but Congress ordered the group disbanded on the grounds that they were not needed.

JACKIE COCHRAN came in 3rd in the 1937 Bendix Air Race, attracting the attention of designer Alexander P. de Seversky. He selected her to fly his new P-35 in an Official Speed Course (not the same as a race). Not only did she fly it, she set a world speed record and later flew a Seversky airplane to win the Bendix Trophy Race in 1938. After the war she became a test pilot, was the first woman to break the sound barrier, and was the holder of more world aviation records than any other pilot. She was a consultant to NASA as well.

Before the US got into WWII, Cochran recruited a group of American women flyers to serve in the British Air Transport Auxiliary to ferry planes from production areas to military bases. In 1942 she

was urged by air staff chief Hap Arnold to organize a similar group in the US, the Womens Airforce Service Pilots known as the WASPs. Between mid 1943 and December 1944, 1074 women built an amazing record. They ferried, trained, towed targets and more. They delivered 12,650 planes of 77 different types.

In December 1944 the program was halted. The women had never been militarized so they packed their bags and went home, most of them at their own expense. In Long Beach, JEAN LANDIS took a map down from her barracks wall. It had 200 stars on it marking the places where she had delivered P-51s. As she walked toward the gate she passed 60 airplanes badly needed in the war with no ferry pilots to deliver them.

In September 1976 the US Senate voted to make WASPs official WWII veterans. Senator Barry Goldwater, a pilot with over 12,000 hours, backed the move and the Senate passed it. He had flown wingtip to wingtip with the WASPs as a pilot based at New Castle, Delaware, but 4 days later the House rejected it. It was W. Bruce Arnold, son of the late Air Force Commanding General Hap Arnold, who spearheaded an attack. My father died in 1950. If he were still alive he would be here speaking for these women. He promised militarization in 1944 and I have to finish my fathers work. Politicos kept the ball in the air for a year with predictable and familiar gyrations, but it finally passed and the WASPs were granted veterans benefits.

JERRIE COBB (a 99 member) was the first woman astronaut candidate. In 1960 she completed astronaut training, became a NASA executive but never flew a space mission. As a pilot she held three world records, won the FAI gold wings of achievement and was manager of Aero Design and Engineering Co. The National Organization for Women has petitioned NASA to allow her, now 67, to take part in the same kind of space-and-aging studies as John Glenn.

WOMEN ASTRONAUTS: The first female in space was a Russian dog named Laika, then there was a Russian woman astronaut in 1963. But here in the forward-thinking US, the first astronauts had to be experienced military test pilots with jet time and women were not allowed to be military test pilots. Indeed, in that time frame they weren't allowed to be military pilots at all. In 1961 a group of 25 exceptionally well-qualified women pilots participated in a fitness testing program at Lovelace Clinic, Albuquerque, NM, to determine whether or not they could pass the exact same tests as the Mercury 7 astronauts had been given several months before. Out of the 25, 13 passed (some surpassed the males). This was academic, of course, and the women called themselves Astro-nots. Actually, NASA had nothing to do with Mercury 13 at all.

The first woman to go into space, Sally Ride, was a Mission Specialist with an advanced degree in engineering. Other female Mission Specialists have distinguished themselves, but the first woman to fly the Space Shuttle, Eileen Collins (a 99), was a military test pilot first. The female Mission Specialists were indeed qualified in their fields, but Eileen Collins had to succeed in a fiercely competitive field of male pilots with no special or separate arrangements whatsoever.

So at last, may we hope that discrimination and prejudice are no longer part of a woman pilot's education? Anyone who thinks that times have changed should know that today only five percent of pilots are women.

----- Editor's Note: The name of the first woman in space, from the Former Soviet Union, is Valentina Tereshkova. -----

4. Roommate Coordinating Service for ACC2000

As an IEEE Women in Control (WiC) member, I have volunteered to organize a roommate location service for the 2000 ACC. It would be most efficient if the individuals desiring roommates would e-mail me the following information:

Name

Gender

Contact e-mail address and phone number

Dates of arrival to and departure from conference hotel

Smoking/Non-smoking preference

Other information that individuals would like to volunteer

Please advise the interested parties that this service is a resource to merely locate potential roommates, not to match specific individuals together. In so doing, neither I nor WiC will be held responsible for any situations that arise as a result of room sharing between particular parties.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I hope to hear from you soon. In the meantime, I look forward to seeing you in Chicago for the 2000 ACC.

Regards,

May-Win Thein

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5. Reviewers Needed for IEEE CSS Conferences

I am looking for reviewers for the next cycle of CSS Conference Papers, that is, the 2000 CDC. Please send me (fnchowdh@louisiana.edu) an email indicating your areas of interest, your email and fax, and whether you would like to get the files in PostScript or PDF format. All reviews will be handled electronically, but you will have the option of sending your reviews to me by email, fax, or by snail-mail.