



Shortly after the disappearance of one of aviation's great woman pilots during her last flight over the Pacific, the members of the Ninety-Nines, the women pilots organization she helped to organize, held a memorial service for her outdoors at one of the airports on Long Island. I was asked to make the address. It was the first public speech I had ever made.

So I am deeply moved tonight to be asked once more to share some of my thoughts concerning this fine woman, one of the most widely known of all of aviation's great pilots, and to help enshrine her in Aviation's Hall of Fame, the first woman to be so honored.




I have mentioned the Ninety-Nines. It was so named because at the start it had only 99 members. Now there are more than 12,000 women pilots in the United States, most of whom are Ninety-Niners. During the war years, I was privileged to follow in her footsteps and to serve two terms as President of the Ninety-Nines. I never forgot for a minute that she was the founder and that her spirit determined the guidelines for the organization's actions.



I am here to present a few of the factual accomplishments of this very dear and close personal friend. In a few minutes, a film will do this more fully.

The skills, determinations and
braveries of a mature person are not
spontaneous occurrences. They are usually
the product of a series of experiences
through early life. And that I believe to
be the case with her. She was catapulted
into fame by an unforeseen opportunity to
ride across the Atlantic purely as a
passenger. But when the greater opportunity
came to more fully use her flying skills,
she was ready.




She was born with a hunger for
accomplishment and a unique spirit of
adventure. She was fed by a life-long
determination never to be dependent on
anyone but herself, and she achieved close
to immortality through her own actions
and skills.

She was born in Kansas more than 70 years ago. Her early life was one of constant shift as her parents moved numerous times throughout the Midwest. She graduated from high school in Chicago in 1916, filled with a zeal to improve the world and a personal conviction that a woman could win her own way without receiving any special consideration. She was soon at work in Toronto, helping nurse wounded Canadian soldiers back to health. It was during World War I that aviation first interested her and she spent much time at the local flying fields absorbing all that she could on the ground.



After the war, she took a course in automobile repair and then enrolled in a premedical course at Columbia University. But this was short-lived and she moved to California with her parents. There she attended an air show at Long Beach and took an air hop for fun with Frank Hawks, who later became one of our country's greatest speed pilots. That show and that flight served as the moments of truth for her. She began the way of life she had been unconsciously seeking. She began preflight training under Neta Shook - the first woman graduate of the Curtiss School of Aviation. Then she took flight training and soloed in 1921 at the age of 22.



The receipt of her pilot's certificate was a proud moment, but she had to earn a living. She studied and practiced commercial photography. She drove a truck. But her flying dreams seemed at an end when it became necessary to sell her small plane and drive her mother East to make a home for her with her sister Muriel.



She then returned to Columbia University for a while, but soon turned to teaching English in underprivileged industrial areas of Massachusetts. Then in 1926, she accepted a position as a social worker in Dennison House, Boston's oldest settlement institution. It was there, after two years, that she received a telephone call that was to change her whole life.

Come share with me now through
the magic of fading film some of the
highlights of her career that followed
that telephone call.




(HER FILM IS SHOWN)



That last flight by Amelia and the search for her touched my life in many ways. She and I were dear friends and close to each other. She had spent a large part of that last year before her flight to Honolulu, and again while her plane was being repaired, with my husband and me at our ranch near Indio, California, and we had helped her financially in connection with both flights.

Many people thought Amelia and I were competitors, particularly after 1935. It was really not so. In that grey area where we both occasionally participated, it was on a most friendly basis. Amelis's specialty was long distance flights where the engine and the fuel have to be babied for optimum results. My specialty was speed where you force engine and everything else to the limit.



Amelia and I had great rapport. I had a very strong sixth sense. We all have it in varying degrees. But I could tell where Amelia was and what she was doing almost at will. She knew the inherent dangers of that flight over the Pacific and began to rely on me to spot her if she should get down.

Amelia disappeared during the very last part of her flight to Howland Island. Her husband, George Putnam, contacted me. I told him what had happened, approximately where she was in her floating and drifting plane. An immediate intensive search by plane and ship was started. She was never found. I don't know whether my sixth sense or intuition failed me, but I was heart sick and never made any effort along these lines again. But they had never failed me before with Amelia, and all subsequent disclosures lead me to believe I was right. If correct, the story is simple. Amelia and her navigator, Fred Noonan, reached Howland Island according to their bearings.

They could not see it because of a peculiar atmospheric condition somewhat like haze, even though flying at 1,000 feet. The radio was not working well. They circled and then began fanning out trying to get a fix by contact with the ship Itasca anchored at the island. Finally out of fuel, they ditched not very far West by Northwest of Howland Island. They floated and drifted for three days before going down. In subsequent years, I talked with the Commander of the Itasca. He had nothing to add that indicated to me that I was wrong. I also talked to one of the Navy's search pilots from the aircraft carrier. He said there were about 90 planes on board participating in the search and that they flew right over Howland Island,

or within 5 miles of it many times, without ever seeing it. How much harder it would be to see a half-submerged plane.



I feel sure that Amelia successfully piloted her Electra to its true destination, where weather and radio obstacles interfered with the final approach and landing. She went down, having committed no major error in flight.

But her spirit lives on. In bodily death, she gained immortality. Tonight I feel her presence in this very room with that sweet wholesome smile and penetrating compassionate eyes, knowing and appreciating this honor that we do her here and now.

Some may say Amelia is a legend
born of a nation's love of hero worship.
I say she was a woman of great qualities
who placed service to mankind far above
comfort and personal safety. She
searched for and accepted the challenges
of life. She once said, "There is so
much fun in life and so much to do that
I don't want to die, but when I do, I
want to go in my plane."

Come rise now as we enshrine
her in Aviations Hall of Fame.

(AFTER PORTRAIT AND AWARDS

PLACQUE UNVEILED

CONTINUE)



Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to now present to you Amelia Earhart's sister, Mrs. Muriel Earhart Morrisey of West Medford, Massachusetts, who will acknowledge this honor on her sister's behalf.

Muriel.....