

Helen V. Cox (Clohecy Bikle)



December 16, 1902 – January 22, 1992

Helen was born in Hagerstown, Maryland, which in 1902 was experiencing significant growth. Because of the expanded rail lines and strong agricultural area, shoe factories and textile mills were located there. Helen was fascinated by machines, cars, and by her teenage years, airplanes.

In the 1920s, airshows in Hagerstown showcased the advancements in aviation technology and offered rides to the public. Helen thoroughly enjoyed her flying experience with the barnstorming pilots. Barnstorming air shows were very popular during these years. Many women pilots were featured flying daring stunts and aerial acrobatics.

Because the Kreider-Reisner Aircraft Company built and tested their airplanes in Hagerstown, Helen hoped she might be a test pilot someday. In 1926, the “Midget” was a popular design. That same year, the low-wing monoplane won the Scientific American Trophy. Helen was a frequent flyer at the aircraft company airfield, which opened in 1928. Today, it is the Hagerstown Regional Airport (KHGR).

Helen continued to build her aviation credentials while attending college to earn her English degree. But, aviation was her goal. As a pioneer aviatrix, Helen was the first woman to hold an Air Transport Pilot license in Maryland and one of the first women to hold that license in the United States. She took part in the 1927 Miami Air Races. She became a test pilot for Kreider-Reisner. Every six months after earning her Transport Pilot’s License #7767 on June 7, 1930, Helen passed the renewal/endorsement required until late 1934.

She was the first fixed-based operator for Hagerstown Airport with her first husband. Helen even flew the U.S. mail route. In 1929, Kreider-Reisner became a subsidiary of the Fairchild Aircraft Corporation. But, Fairchild brought in its own pilots and engineers to the expanded aircraft corporation.

Helen, the “go-getter,” taught English for many years in the Washington County system. She earned a master’s degree from the University of Maryland. She retired from teaching in

1972. She was a member of the American University Women and Retired Teachers Association. She owned and operated the successful Bikle's Fruit Farm with her second husband. In 1979-80, Helen was featured in Who's Who among American Women.

In 1986, the OX5 Club, which is dedicated to preserving and promoting early aviation history and "Early Bird" pioneers, honored Helen with the prestigious Wing Award. The OX5 Curtiss was an early American production V-8 aircraft engine. It was the first to enter mass production. A charter 99, Helen Cox Clohecy Bikle blazed a path for others to follow, even today.

By Penny Rafferty Hamilton, Ph.D., Idaho Chapter
Ninety-Nines magazine, November 2025

99 Charter Biography File

Maiden Name: Helen Virginia Cox

Married Name(s): Clohecy; Bikle

Date of birth: December 16, 1902

Birthplace: Hagerstown, Maryland

Date of death: January 22, 1992

Death place: Mountain View Cemetery, Maryland

Occupation(s): pilot, teacher, social worker

License(s): 7767

Known stats:

1. First woman to hold an Air Transport Pilot license in Maryland
2. Took part in 1927 Miami Air Races
3. Test pilot for Kreider-Reisner
4. First fix-based operator for Hagerstown Airport in 1929.

Publications:

1. Death notice. The Daily Mail. January 23, 1992.

Award(s):

1. OX5 Club Haussner Wing Award

Miscellaneous information:

1. Married Robert Clohecy in 1930; had one son
2. Married Austin H. Bikle (1910-1990) in 1938; Bikle adopted son from previous marriage

File contents: no photos or artifacts.