

## **Agnes A. Mills**

(1899-1991)

aka Agnes A. Mills

In 1929, aviatrix Agnes Mills was noted as "Florida's first licensed female pilot" (#5711) and learned to fly at the A.B. McCullen School in Tampa. That same year, she became a charter member of 'The Ninety-Nines', International Organization of Women Pilots and had some notoriety in the news when she performed at local air meets and announced her intent to fly across the Atlantic. That never panned out and almost as quickly as she appeared in aviation news clips of the day, she faded from the scene and eventually disappeared from The 99s roster too. Records piece together her life:

Agnes was born August 10, 1899, to Jacob and Johanna (Heinkamp) Schroeck in St Louis, Missouri. As a young woman, Agnes had left Missouri and was living in Denver, Colorado with a Marguerite Heitkamp (likely a maternal cousin) as enumerated on the U.S. census taken in January of 1920. Both were working as telegraph operators. On June 19, 1920, a Colorado Springs, Colorado marriage between Agnes A Schroeck and Army Signal Corpman Benjamin M Ballas was recorded. In November of 1921 their son Benjamin Jr was born in San Francisco. When Agnes' mother died in 1924, her will stipulated that, "As my son Alphonse and my daughter Agnes A. Ballas (nee Schroeck) married without my consent, and are able to care for themselves, I do not wish them to have any part of my estate." Shortly after that, Agnes surfaces in Tampa, Florida. She had split from her husband and on October 8, 1925, in Pinellas, Florida Agnes A. Ballas (26) married Richard Ivan Mills. The 1929 Tampa City Directory lists her employed as an operator with the Postal Telegraph Company. Her second husband was also in the telegraph business. (Around this time, on the 1930 census her first husband is listed as divorced and living in San Francisco and the subsequent census shows Benjamin Jr. (18) enumerated in San Francisco, and himself working as a telegraph operator).

Sometime in 1929, Agnes and Richard left Tampa for New York, as her address noted in The Ninety-Nines membership roster was in Floral Park (Long Island). The 1930 census for the roster address of 23 Plainfield Avenue recorded an Agnes Mills (30) and Richard Mills living there. They have no children. Enumerated at that same address a decade later are Agnes Mills (40) and Richard Ivan Mills (employed as a Testing Chief for a Telegraph Company). There is also a 'lodger' from Wales, Evan Pugh (23), living in their household. Sometime after 1942, the Mills divorced, and Agnes ended up in Northern California as the 1950 census shows her living in Gilroy running a restaurant in Santa Clara County. She passed away there in 1991. She was predeceased by her son Benjamin M. Ballas, Jr. in 1979, and survived by her husband and a grandson.

Listed as from Floral Park, New York but news clips place her in Tampa, Florida and the first woman licensed in the state.