

https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~fayfamily/genealogy/joanna_lillie.html

Joanna Lillie Fay

Her Achievements in Aviation



photo by Bachrack, about 1926-1927 Born on July 2, 1908, her birth was registered under the name Joanna Lillie both in Falmouth, where her parents were living, and in Boston, where she was apparently born. Although still called "Joanna" in 1910, she began using "Joan" early. She was married in Massachusetts to Clarence E. $\frac{1}{2}$ Dutch $\frac{1}{2}$ Shankle on February 29, 1928.

Joan's story, and the photographs here, were contributed by her sons John Dyer Shankle II and his brothers, Joseph Fay Shankle, George W. Davis and Prescott Leeds Davis, either directly through email correspondence with John, or indirectly through the Arizona Aviation Hall of Fame and [The Joan Fay Shankle Page of the Davis Monthan Airfield Register Website](#). Since they contributed the information and photos to the website, and since they have given permission to use them, I have not hesitated to copy most of what follows from there. Her husband taught her to fly, under a student pilot's permit (#9639) issued in Boston, MA on December 19, 1928. Her student permit identified her as 20 years old; 126 pounds; 5 feet 6 inches tall; hair and eyes brown.



She soloed on May 13, 1929, and telegraphed her family in Switzerland that she had done so. She was the first woman to receive a private pilot's license in Massachusetts (Private license no. 7838, issued on July 5, 1929). Her achievement was publicly [acknowledged in the newspapers](#).

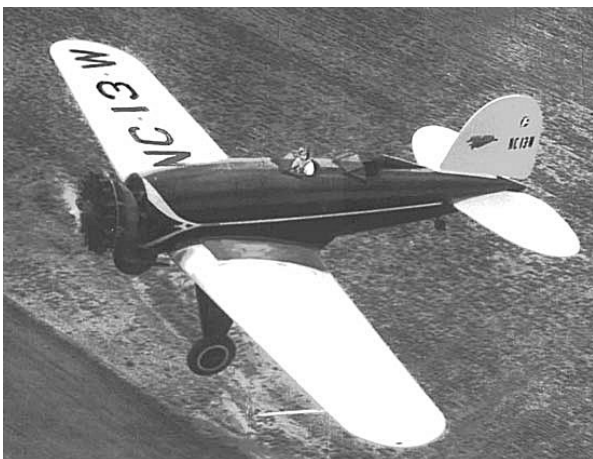
Joan's pilot's ID, September 1929

She soon became a leader among women pilots and, in the fall of 1929, helped found [the 99s](#), an International Organization of Women Pilots, as a charter member. She became chair of the New England chapter and spoke to many women's clubs about aviation.

In October 1929, when her husband, who was in the military, needed to ferry new Douglas O-2 aircraft from California back to Boston, she flew him to March Field in their own private Stearman (NC5491). She then flew the Stearman back east, becoming the first woman to fly solo from the Pacific coast to the Atlantic coast. This is the flight she cited on October 23 in the Register where she is flying the Stearman. Note on the signature line above hers in the Register that she is accompanied by her husband flying his Douglas O-2K. (More information about her Register entries can be found at the [Davis-Monthan site](#) noted above.) Newspaper headlines announced the achievement:

**WIFE OF ARMY FLYER COMPLETES
SOLO TRANSCONTINENTAL FLIGHT**

(full text with photo can be seen [here](#))



She was also the first woman to fly solo from Boston to Miami. In Boston, as her flying experience increased, she became eligible to take the examination for a limited commercial license; she was the first woman in Massachusetts to obtain this license. She also earned a Transport Pilot license. During 1930, her husband was promoted and assigned to Fort Sill, OK. About a year later, he resigned from the military and they moved to their PM



Ranch just north of Tubac and 40 miles south of Tucson. They built an airstrip to keep their Stearman J-5 and Lockheed Sirius (NC13W cited three times in the Register piloted by Joan). They made frequent flights around Arizona and from coast to coast, including good will visits to Mexico. Young son, Joseph, generally accompanied them on their flights and had his own log book, faithfully kept for each flight, and his own flying equipment. Joan Shankle was the only

Arizona woman entered in the 1931 National Air Races, which had a field of 16 women and 44 men. In the 2,400 mile Women's Speed Classic, she placed ninth despite a broken stabilizer that developed a short distance from Amarillo, TX. She repaired the break with a piece of barbed wire and finished the race. The Blue Book of Aviation cites her as having accumulated 625 flight hours as of 1932. All totaled, she made three round trips across the country through 1932. Later, at the first annual Tucson Air Show was held in 1933. Joan finished third in the free for all Air Race. Below, the FAI license in effect during her competition in the 1931 National Air Races.

Joan's FAI License, 1931

On August 24, 1937, Joan graduated from Dallas Aviation School and Air College in Link Trainer Instruments and radio blind flight. In May 1938, she was the only woman pilot carrying mail in Texas in observance of National Air Mail Week. *(image on right taken from a newspaper article about the event; for the full picture and article, look [here](#).)* From 1929 to 1938 she flew a total of 1,311:35 hours. She had accumulated 2,300 flying hours as of June 20, 1941. She divorced her husband just before WWII, married another flier and had two more sons. She died in Honolulu in 1964. *Joan Fay Shankle and Dutch Shankle were inducted into the Arizona Aviation Hall of Fame on April 17, 1999.*



Joan with her Waco airplane, about 1940