



## **THE AMELIA EARHART MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

### **PERPETUAL SCHOLARSHIP BIOGRAPHIES**

Amelia Earhart was a Charter Member and the first President of The Ninety-Nines. She was the first woman pilot to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean and flew to new horizons in 1937 during an attempt to fly around the world. The Ninety-Nines established the Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship Fund in 1940 to honor her memory and perpetuate her ideals and love of flying. From a single scholarship of \$125 in 1941, the annual Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship Fund has grown to help over 750 women from around the world to advance and succeed in aviation and aerospace.

The Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship Fund is a unique entity, separate from The Ninety-Nines, Inc. Managed through a charter by Trustees who are 99s members, the Fund's financial statements are included in The Ninety-Nines' annual financial statements, available from 99s Headquarters upon request.



### **Jane Zieber Kelley Memorial Scholarship of the Aeons**

Jane Kelley (1935–1978) of the Aloha Chapter was setting aside her earnings as flight instructor in order to buy an aerobatic airplane in 1974 when her family pitched in to get her a Pitts Special for Mother’s Day. She went on to become an accomplished aerobatics competitor and judge, and also earned her airline transport pilot and seaplane ratings. In 1979 this first perpetual scholarship was established in Jane’s memory from funds donated by her family and 99s members.

### **Gerda Ruhnke Memorial Flight Instructor Scholarship**

#### ***For a Flight Instructor Certificate or Rating***

Gerda Irene Ruhnke (1939-1987) was in 1959 one of the first women pilots in her native Uruguay. A respected flight instructor in Washington DC, Gerda was instructing a new student when her plane crashed under very suspicious circumstances. The Washington DC Chapter raised the funds to establish this scholarship in 1988, to memorialize Gerda and her inspiration to teach with courage, enthusiasm, and the love of teaching and flying.



### **Gerry Mickelsen Memorial Scholarship**

Past President Geraldine “Gerry” Williamson Michelsen (1913-1990) learned to fly in 1935 and served as a Women’s Airforce Service Pilot during World War II and flew in seven Powder Puff Derbies. As 99s President from 1953-1955, Gerry coordinated The 99s headquarters move from New York to Oklahoma City, and personally presented yearly compilations of the history of The 99s to the Smithsonian Institution, a practice which continues to this day. Gerry generously bequeathed the funds to establish this perpetual scholarship.

### **Alice Hammond Memorial Scholarship**

This scholarship honors Past President Alice Carstens Hirschman Hammond (1907-1993). Alice learned to fly in a Curtiss Wright Jr. monoplane and went on to become a commercial, instrument, and seaplane pilot. She organized and commanded the first all-woman flying squadron for the Civil Air Patrol during World War II and was a charter member of the FAA's Women's Advisory Committee on Aviation. She was instrumental in founding the Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship Fund in 1941, served on the AEMSF Board for many years, and was 99s President from 1951 to 1953. For her 60 years of service to The 99s, she was bestowed the Award of Merit in 1992. This scholarship was established in 1995 in Alice's memory, with donations from 99s members and her family.



### **Lygie Hagan Memorial Scholarship**

Lydiellen M. "Lygie" Hagan (1908-1995) learned to fly because her husband twisted her arm. A member of the Intermountain Chapter, she served The 99s as Northwest Section Governor, International Secretary and Treasurer, Board Member, and AEMSF Trustee. On her death, Lygie bequeathed the proceeds of the sale of her antique car to the AEMSF. This scholarship was established in 1997 with those funds and an additional donation by her husband.

### **Kay Brick Memorial Scholarship**

Past President Katherine A. "Kay" Menges Brick (1910-1995) flew for the Civil Air Patrol early in World War II and then was recruited to the Women's Airforce Service Pilots, where she flew in the advanced ferry command. Kay was 99s President from 1950 to 1951, and led the Powder Puff Derby as chairman for many years. She received many national and international accolades for her service to aviation and, still an active pilot late in life, she became a member of the United Flying Octogenarians. The Coyote County Chapter donated this scholarship in 1998 to honor Kay's memory.





### **Betty DeWitt Wittmer Memorial Scholarship**

Betty DeWitt Wittmer (1922-2006) learned to fly at age 54 and was still flying her Piper Dakota three decades later. A charter member of the Oregon Pines Chapter, she represented the 99s on the Oregon Aviation Alliance. In 1999 Betty established this perpetual scholarship with her generous donation so that today's women can enter careers that were not necessarily open to her generation.

### **Gini Richardson Memorial Scholarship**

Virginia S. "Gini" Richardson (1924-1991) was a charter member of five chapters in the Northwest Section, and as owner and operator of numerous flying businesses she contributed much to the growth of aviation in the northwestern United States. The fifth woman to obtain the US ATP, Gini was also an avid air racer with over a hundred air racing trophies – and she won the Powder Puff Derby three times. This scholarship was established in 2000 with a generous donation by her family.



### **Dottie Sanders Memorial Scholarship**

V. Darlene "Dottie" Sanders (1918-1999) served as first Chairman of the El Cajon Valley Chapter and as Southwest Section Governor. Dottie helped organize and flew in many air races, including 20 times in the Powder Puff Derby, in which she placed first in 1972 while flying as co-pilot. She was inducted into the International Forest of Friendship in 1985. On her death, Dottie bequeathed a substantial sum to The 99s and the AEMSF. This scholarship was established in 2000 to honor her memory.

### **Milton and Bonnie Seymour Memorial Scholarship**

Bonnie Seymour (b.1922) is a charter member and the first Chairman of the Lake Tahoe Chapter. During Bonnie's tenure as AEMSF Trustee, her husband Milt made investment suggestions that helped the Fund grow substantially, and Bonnie was instrumental in the production of a video and handbook about the AEMSF. This scholarship was established with Bonnie's generous donation in 2000 to honor her late husband Milt.



### **Marion Barnick Memorial Scholarship**

This scholarship honors the memory of Marion Barnick (1919-1979). Marion was a charter member of Santa Clara Valley 99s, and served as Southwest Section Governor. Marion learned to fly in 1939 and held all ratings through ATP. She loved to fly, loved to teach, and loved to help young women attain their aviation goals. The Santa Clara Valley Chapter established this scholarship to honor Marion in 1980, and administered it through 2000, when it was turned over to the AEMSF.

### **Evelyn Bryan Johnson Memorial Scholarship**

Evelyn Bryan Johnson (b. 1909) is a longtime pilot, flight instructor, and Tennessee Chapter 99 who has received many honors for her flying career of over 57,000 flight hours. Upon establishing this scholarship in 2002, the Tennessee Chapter said, "We have enjoyed and benefited from Evelyn's inspiration and companionship over many years and are so pleased to honor her with a perpetual scholarship to benefit women pilots' career aspirations."





### **Mary Kelly Memorial Scholarship**

In 1985 Mary Kelly was awarded an Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship to complete her Bachelors degree in Aviation Education and Aviation Management. As a flight instructor, flight school owner, and airport manager in Oklahoma, Mary Kelly (1943-1998) was a wonderful role model and mentor to young women who wanted careers in aviation. Mary launched an all-girls flying camp for 14 to 17 year olds, guided young women pilots on a path towards success, and helped them find financial assistance and jobs. The Oklahoma Chapter donated this perpetual scholarship to the AEMSF in 2003 to honor Mary and continue her legacy of mentoring, supporting, and promoting young women in aviation careers.

### **Minnesota Chapter Scholarship**

#### ***In 2007 honoring Elizabeth Wall Strohfus***

The Minnesota Chapter raised money over ten years to establish this scholarship in 2004, this year honoring Elizabeth Wall Strohfus. Liz flew military aircraft during World War II as a Woman Airforce Service Pilot (WASP). At age 71, Liz realized others were interested in her stories. Now an octogenarian, Liz has inspired school kids, veterans groups, pilots, and the general public at hundreds of speaking events. Liz is a member of the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame and a beloved member of The Ninety-Nines.



### **Albuquerque- El Paso**

#### **Ruth Deerman Scholarship**

##### ***For a New Pilot Award***

Ruth Deerman (1905-2006) learned to fly in 1944, eventually becoming a flight instructor, helicopter pilot, and winner of the Powder Puff Derby. Ruth served The Ninety-Nines as International President from 1963 to 1965. Because Ruth was always looking out for women student pilots and founded the '66' program, the El Paso and Albuquerque Chapters established this new scholarship in Ruth's honor, to provide for a New Pilot Award each year.

### **Past Winners Scholarship**

Whether they were gainfully employed, retired, or furloughed, past AE Scholarship winners were grateful to have a tangible way of giving back to The Ninety-Nines and helping future generations of women pilots. Several even repaid the entire amount of their original scholarship. This perpetual scholarship was established in 2004 on behalf of all AE Scholarship winners from 1941 to 2003.



### **Fay Gillis Wells Memorial Scholarship**

Fay Gillis Wells (1908-2002) was one of the ladies who gathered at Curtiss Field in 1929 for the first meeting of women pilots who organized The Ninety-Nines. Over the next 72 years, Fay continued her dedicated service to aviation and aerospace, becoming one of The Ninety-Nines' most beloved Charter Members and founder of the International Forest of Friendship. This scholarship was established in 2004 in Fay's honor, made possible by generous contributions from her many friends in The Ninety-Nines and the Forest of Friendship.

### **North Central Section Scholarship**

The funds for this scholarship were raised by chapters in the North Central Section that donated items for silent auctions held at section meetings over many years, and by individual NCS members who sold 99s logo notecards, address labels, and business cards. The scholarship was completed in 2005 with monies from the section budget, and was given to the AEMSF "in memory of North Central Section Members who have flown to new horizons and in honor of the 99s Members in our special Section."





### **Achsa Donnels Memorial Scholarship**

Being aloft on her first airplane ride was “a marvelous feeling, like being an angel,” said Achsa Barnwell Peacock Holfelder Donnels in her autobiography. She returned the next day to begin flying lessons – in 1923. She always regretted missing the first Women’s Air Derby (Powder Puff Derby), but eagerly signed up to be a charter member of The Ninety-Nines. Achsa went on to be among the earliest women to earn the Transport Pilot license, in 1931, and with her flying husband Ross Peacock ran a flight school and an airline, among other aviation ventures. Achsa Donnels (1904-2003) completed her autobiography at age 93 and attended 99s meetings up until shortly before her death. Her friends in the Southwest Section raised the money to establish this scholarship in her honor in 2005.



### **Christine Winzer Memorial Scholarship *For an Airline Transport Pilot Certificate***

In 1966 there were three AE Scholarship winners, and Christine Winzer (1922-2005) used hers to achieve the Airline Transport Pilot certificate with a Multi-Engine rating. She went on to become an FAA Aviation Safety Program Manager, where she was known for organizing and speaking at aviation safety and accident prevention seminars throughout Michigan, including a 1981 Super Safety Seminar in Lansing that drew some 2500 people, 200 airplanes, and 22 exhibitors. When she passed away in 2005, Chris bequeathed her substantial estate to The Ninety-Nines, with the majority dedicated to a perpetual scholarship for women pilots to earn their airline transport pilot certificate.





### **Ventura County Chapter Scholarship**

The Ventura County Chapter raised funds for its own scholarships for many years. When they added a silent auction to their annual pancake breakfast at the Camarillo Air Show and expanded their pilot proficiency and safety education programs,

a surprising amount of money came in, sufficient to expand their scholarship offerings and to donate to the AEMSF in 2006. The Ventura County Chapter says, “Every chapter has its own special strengths to share with others in the organization, and we feel very fortunate to be able to endow a perpetual scholarship because, when able, 99s should reach beyond their local chapters to aid women who lack local financial support. We also feel it is important to look beyond our membership for fundraising. By reaching out to both the aviation and local communities, we not only widen our resource base, but establish a positive connection between citizens and their local airports.”

### **Lisa Netsch Memorial Scholarship**

Lisa Netsch was a passionate and trailblazing pilot. With her commercial-instrument, flight instructor, and airframe & powerplant mechanic’s licenses, plus a degree in aeronautical engineering, Lisa was an aerospace engineer for the McDonnell Douglas Company, then an aircraft accident investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board, while in her spare time she was an aerobatics instructor in Long Beach, California. She found her dream job as an air tanker pilot, flying the DC-4 aircraft that dropped flame retardants on forest fires in Southern California. Lisa died when her aircraft was hit by another plane during landing after a successful fire mission. Lisa found freedom, confidence, and joy in flying, and as an instructor, she hoped to bring those experiences to others. She also believed that aerobatic flying saved lives by teaching pilots to recover to dangerous spins and stalls. The memory of Lisa Netsch (1963-1995) is honored by her family in their donation of this scholarship: “She would be proud to help other women achieve their flying dreams.”





### **Libby Kaiser Memorial Scholarship**

Ann Elizabeth (“Libby”) Kaiser (1928-2005) learned to fly at the University of Illinois Institute of Aviation and received her private pilot’s license in January 1965. She began to fly at the encouragement of her husband, Bob, so that the family with three young sons (ages 12, 10 and 8) could fly together. Libby was active in her local 99s chapter and took additional flying courses at the Institute. She flew a 1957 Cessna 172 and co-piloted a 1965 Beechcraft Debonair with her husband Bob until his death in 1998. Libby continued to fly after 1998 with her youngest son, Jim, until her death in May of 2005. This perpetual scholarship was established in 2005 by her three sons and friends to honor the memory of Libby and Bob.



### **Helma DeFronzo Memorial Scholarship**

Helma DeFronzo (1944-2004) was born in Norway, raised and educated in Germany, and moved to the United States in 1967. Helma learned to fly in 1981 and became a commercial-instrument rated pilot, flying her own Piper Warrior and developing her aerial photography business. She enjoyed traveling with her husband and visited all seven continents. Upon her death, Helma bequeathed a substantial portion of her estate to our scholarship fund. This perpetual scholarship was established in 2007 to honor her.



### **Vicki Cruse Memorial Scholarship for Emergency Maneuver Training**

Ventura County Ninety-Nine and national aerobatic champion pilot, Vicki Cruse perished in 2009 while representing the United States in the World Aerobatic Competition in the United Kingdom. To honor her memory and celebrate her accomplishments, her Ninety-Nines chapter, in conjunction with Lightspeed Aviation and the Lee H. Cruse Trust, raised funds for this perpetual scholarship. Vicki was devoted to educating pilots about the safety benefits of emergency maneuver and unusual attitude training. Her devotion to flying and safety inspired those who knew her to preserve her memory with this scholarship.



### **Thon Griffith Memorial Scholarship**

Thon Griffith served as The Ninety-Nines President from 1978 through 1980. She was a classic driving force in the organization and touched the lives of people around her with her demeanor and grace. She and her husband Bob DeLong, were both devoted to The Ninety-Nines. Bob was the “anonymous” donor who helped the organization purchase Louise Thaden’s Travel Air in which Thaden flew in the first All-Women’s Transcontinental Air Race in 1929. A constant support of the Ninety-Nines, Bob established this perpetual scholarship in her memory after her death in 2013.



### **Catherine (Kitty) Houghton Memorial Scholarship**

Kitty Houghton devoted her life to helping people improve their life situation and that of those around them. She served in the Peace Corps, in one of the first groups to go to Nepal, from 1964-1966. Later she served in the US Foreign Commercial Service for 24 years. While stationed in West Africa, Kitty learned to fly. In 1996, living in Ottawa, Canada, she joined The Ninety-Nines. Following her retirement from the Foreign Service in 2007, she settled in California served as Marin Chapter’s membership chair and as liaison with The Ninety-Nines for foreign Ninety-Nines. She had published a documentary about the Nepal Ninety-Nines. Kitty’s family and friends established this perpetual scholarship to carry on her international out-reach with women pilots.



### **Thelma Cull Memorial Scholarship**

When long-time member, Thelma Cull passed away, she made generous provisions in her Estate planning for all the Ninety-Nines’ Trusts. The AEMSF Trustees decided to mark her donation to the scholarship fund as a Perpetual Scholarship. After speaking with her family, the emphasis from her donation will be geared toward the Academic Scholarship and the First Wings Award. Our thankfulness to Thelma and the place she holds in our hearts is difficult to measure.





### **Marta Bohn-Meyer Memorial Award**

Marta Bohn-Meyer (1957-2005) was a flight instructor, world class competitive aerobatic aviatrix, and NASA test pilot. 1991, she was the first woman to fly the triple sonic SR-71 Blackbird. Bohn-Meyer specialized in developing test techniques, flight test operations, and laminar flow research. During her distinguished career she was flight test project manager, director of flight operations, director of safety and mission assurance, and ultimately chief engineer of NASA's Dryden (now Armstrong) Flight Research Center.

### **Eileen R. Kay Memorial Scholarship**

A member of the Washington DC Chapter, Eileen Ruth Kay took up flying in her 60s when many pilots are folding up their wings. She proudly received her private pilot certificate in 2012. Eileen was a talented designer with a flair for the offbeat. Next to her family, her greatest passion was helping women and girls achieve their dreams and goals. This perpetual scholarship through The 99s will forever help to bring that pride and joy to future generations of female pilots.



### **Margot J. Eld Scholarship**

Margot Eld (1942-) held a commercial pilot certificate for both hot air balloons and fixed wing aircraft. She was a member of the Eastern PA Chapter and the Mid-Atlantic Section, having held offices in both. Although not a pilot, her husband Terry was supportive of her love of flying. She established this scholarship to enable other women to become part of the aviation community.

## **Cecile S. Hatfield Memorial Scholarship**

### ***For First Wings Award***

Cecile Schwebel Hatfield (1931-2025) was a pioneering woman aviator and aviation attorney, breaking down barriers for women in both the legal and aviation sectors. Cecile graduated from the University of Florida in 1952, and from the University of Miami's Law School in 1975. She was the first woman to serve as Chairwoman of the American Bar Association's Aviation and Space Law Committee, the first woman as Associate General Counsel for the Piper Aircraft Corporation, and served for nine years in the U.S. Department of Justice as lead counsel in complex air carrier lawsuits and oversaw client aviation attorneys at the FAA. She won 1984's landmark case *Varig v. United States* at the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of the government.



In 1962, she conquered her fear of flying at Miami's Opa Locka airport. Cecile's flight instructor was a frequent co-pilot to Amelia Earhart. She earned her ground school instructor certificate immediately after her private pilot. She joined the Ninety-Nines and was the organization's legal counsel until her passing. Throughout the 1960's and early 1970's, she participated in the annual Intercontinental Women's Air Derby (Angel Derby), and was an unofficial goodwill ambassador who presented letters of friendship from U.S. Presidents to their counterparts in countries across the Western Hemisphere. Vice President Hubert Humphrey once offered Cecile a job as his personal pilot.

Cecile has received numerous honors and awards including the 2009 Award for Excellence in Aviation Law presented by ERAU, now named in her honor. She lectured and wrote articles for legal and aviation organizations, served on the Editorial Board of the Aviation Litigation Reporter and as Editor of the Newsletter for the ABA Forum Committee on Air and Space Law.

Cecile's love of fashion and movies propelled her into a short career as a model and an actress. She starred as Miss Ziegfeld in the Ziegfeld Follies, appeared in television commercials for the Arthur Godfrey and Garry Moore Shows, and had a small role in Frank Sinatra's 1959 movie *A Hole in the Head*.