

Wing Tips

THE AEROSPACE EDUCATION NEWSLETTER OF NEW YORK WING SUMMER 2012

Westchester County Airport: 24 Loop Road, Bldg 1; White Plains, NY 10604-1218
Lt Col Marilyn Rey, CAP, DAE Lt Col George Fillgrove, CAP, Assist. DAE

Col Jack Ozer, CAP, Commander
Maj George Geller, CAP, AEO Maj Richard Lauricella, CAP, AEO

FILLGROVE DONATES TROPHY

Lt Col George Fillgrove has obtained a beautiful stainless steel aircraft model which he is donating to New York Wing. It is to be used as a traveling trophy to be awarded each year to the Group that wins the Aerospace Education Display Contest at the New York Wing Conference.

The trophy will be named in honor of Lt Col Ruth Nichols (1901-1960) who was a member of New York Wing, CAP. Ruth Nichols was a renowned woman aviator and supporter of humanitarian causes.

While a student at Wellesley College, she secretly took flying lessons. She learned to fix and fly a Curtiss Seagull and in 1924, she became the second woman pilot licensed by the Department of Commerce. She was the first woman seaplane pilot to be licensed in the United States. In 1928 she flew non-stop from New York to Miami, Florida as co-pilot with Harry Rogers, her former flight instructor, in a Fairchild FC-2. Sherman Fairchild was impressed and hired her as a sales manager for Fairchild Aircraft and Engine Corporation. Also in 1928, she was the first of three women to earn an Air Transport Pilot rating.

In 1931, Ruth Nichols set a woman's speed record of 210.7 mph, an altitude record of 28,743 feet, and a non-stop distance record of 1,977.6 miles. She hoped to become the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. Unfortunately for her, two accidents badly damaged the Lockheed Vega that she was using. While she and the aircraft were undergoing repairs, Amelia Earhart achieved this elusive goal in May of 1932.

During her flying career, Ruth Nichols held 35 woman's aviation records and flew a great variety of aircraft including dirigible, autogiro, glider, flying boat, pontoon seaplane, various single and multi-engine landplanes, and an Air Force supersonic jet trainer.

Ruth Nichols, Amelia Earhart and 97 other woman pilots met together at Curtiss Field (now Green Acres Shopping Center) on Long Island in 1929 to form an organization of woman pilots. Since 99 woman pilots showed up at the meeting, they decided to call their organization, The Ninety-Nines.



Lt Col George Fillgrove holds the beautiful stainless steel model that he is donating to New York Wing. It will serve as a traveling trophy to be awarded to the Group that wins the Aerospace Education Display contest at the Wing Conference each year. It will be named in honor of Lt Col Ruth Nichols, who was a member of New York Wing, a renowned woman aviator, and a humanitarian,

Ruth Nichols was also involved with humanitarian causes. In 1940, she founded Relief Wings an air ambulance service which had centers in most states by the fall of 1941. This became part of Civil Air Patrol during World War II. Ruth Nichols worked as a nurse and a flight instructor during the War. After the War, she organized a mission in support of UNICEF during which she flew a round the world tour. She advised CAP on air ambulance missions. She was director of women's activities for Save the Children, director of the women's division of the United Hospital Fund and field director for the National Nephrosis (a rare kidney disease) Foundation.

Ruth Nichols wrote her autobiography entitled *Wings for Life* which is currently out-of-print.

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