

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR VICKI CRUSE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

(prepared by The Ninety-Nines, Inc.)

Vicki Cruse (1967- 2009)

From Sea to Sky Vicki Cruse was born in Springfield, Missouri, where she is still fondly remembered. She moved to Florida to attend the University of Miami, where she earned a Bachelor of Science and Master's degree in Marine Biology in 1992. After many years spent focusing on what was under the sea, she turned her vision skyward and began taking flying lessons. Vicki was a mere five feet tall and weighed a hundred pounds soaking wet. Sitting on a phone book, she could barely see over the instrument panel of the airplane in which she trained.

Considering her later accomplishments, it is surprising to learn that Cruse didn't pass her first private pilot check ride. That was because her instructor hadn't taught her how to slip. A few days later, she went up again and passed the test, earning her pilot's license in 1993. Soon, she purchased a Christen Eagle aircraft sight-unseen, a type in which she'd had no previous experience. In 1995, she visited Oshkosh, Wisconsin's huge annual air show and joined the International Aerobatic Club (IAC), a division of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA).

Timid Fledgling Despite her avid interest, Cruse still hadn't flown since she got her license. As is true of many new pilots, Vicki did not trust herself to fly alone, so she did not fly again until 1996. It was then that she had her Eagle flown out to California and took Master Flight Instructor Rich Stowell's Emergency Maneuver Training Course. This gave her the confidence she needed to fly the Christen Eagle not only alone, but to begin aerobatic training. "The introduction to aerobatics changed my life," she said.

Precision Vicki took very meticulous care of her aircraft. Aerobatics requires precise flying, and this art fit the tiny dynamo perfectly. She pushed herself to perform the many maneuvers more and more skillfully with each flight, until she was among the best in the nation.

Achievements Cruse was such an astute pilot that in 1997, just two months after soloing in the Eagle, she entered her first aerobatic competition. Needing a reliable aircraft to pursue higher levels of competition, she purchased a Zivko Edge 540 and had specially-adapted pedals crafted so she could reach them. She embarked on a steady rise through the levels of competition and success on the national level. She also was the first woman to qualify and race in the Sport Class at the Reno Air Races, flying her Glasair III, the "Cruse Missile" at speeds approaching 264 mph. Her many accomplishments include:

- Four- Time US Team member
- 1998 Sportsman National
- 2005 Woman's National Champion
- 2007 US National

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion • 2000 Intermediate Champion, Championship of the Americas • 2000 Advanced 3rd U.S. Nationals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion • IAC President • Sport Class Racer at Reno |
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Personality and Service Cruse was a bright, spunky, humble and gracious lady. She had a great sense of humor and loved to play pranks on her IAC buddies. Vicki joined the Ventura County Chapter of The Ninety-Nines, Inc. in 2004 and immediately became involved with her Chapter's Girl Scouts in Aviation Days, speaking to groups of young girls about flying careers and aerobatics. As a Chapter member, she mentored and inspired her sister 99s to pursue further training, helping at least one to become an aerobatic competitor as well.

Like Amelia Earhart, Vicki was naturally reserved, but devotion to her sport pushed her to reach beyond her shyness and become a speaker about aviation. Her presentations to pilots focused on the topics of Aerobatics and the value of Emergency Maneuver and Unusual Attitude training. She stressed that this training would increase pilot confidence, lower anxiety and increase overall enjoyment of flying. She was an excellent aerobatics judge and helped train many other judges. She wrote the "Technical Advisor" column for the IAC's magazine, *Sport Aerobatics* and served as IAC President since 2005.. She was a member of the board of IAC, EAA and Unlimited Aerobatics USA Inc.

Legacy Vicki Cruse said, "Despite the fact that the general population thinks flying is difficult, it is really something most people can do. If people can just feel the freedom it gives us and the satisfaction we get from it, everyone would do it." One of the missions of the IAC is to educate pilots about the safety benefits of emergency maneuver and unusual attitude training. Vicki's devotion to flying and safety has led those who knew her to preserve her memory by enabling others to become more precise and safe pilots through the Vicki Cruse Memorial Scholarship

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Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship Fund

Amelia Earhart was a Charter Member and the first President of The Ninety-Nines. AE, as she liked to be called, was perhaps the most storied and beloved woman pilot in her day. Shy by nature, she was passionate about helping women who wanted to fly in a world when ladies were discouraged from participating in such activities, so she bravely gave speeches promoting the cause. AE perished in 1937 during one of the final legs of an attempt to fly around the world. In 1940, The Ninety-Nines established the Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship Fund(AEMSF) to honor AE's memory and

perpetuate her hope that more women would take to the skies. From the first \$125 scholarship awarded in 1941 to today, the AEMSFS has helped nearly 500 women from six countries to advance and succeed in aviation and aerospace. Over its nearly 70-year history, the AEMSFS has developed a well-established mechanism to widely publicize the availability of its scholarships. Currently, awards are offered for flight training, jet type ratings, and technical training. There are also academic scholarships which allow research scholars and scientists to add to the world's knowledge of women in aviation and aerospace. Past awardees have become flight school owners, corporate and airline pilots, research scholars, flight instructors, and managers with the Federal Aviation Administration. Each year, an independent panel of judges selects awardees through a well-established judging process. The Fund is meticulously managed through a charter by a group of Trustees with the assistance of professional investment advisors. Due to continuing generous contributions and careful management, the Fund has grown to more than \$4 million, despite the many scholarships, grants, and awards given out annually. As a nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, the Fund can accept tax deductible donations.

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The Ninety-Nines, Inc.

International Organization of Women Pilots

In 1929 there were 117 female pilots in the United States. They were invited to join an association for mutual support and the advancement of aviation. Twenty-six of them gathered at Curtiss Airport in Valley Stream, New York. They had no trouble deciding on eligibility and purpose. Membership would be open to any woman with a pilot's license, and the purpose was "good fellowship, jobs, and a central office and files on women in aviation." Choosing a name was a little harder. After a number of light-hearted suggestions, Amelia Earhart proposed that the name be taken from the number of charter members. Thus, the group was briefly the 86s, then the 97s, and finally the 99s. In 1931 the group elected Amelia Earhart as their first president. Since that time, the organization has grown to include more than 5,100 members from countries around the world. Members include professional pilots for airlines, industry and government. Others are military pilots, flight instructors, astronauts, aviation performers and competitors, technicians and mechanics and many fly just for the sheer enjoyment. First and foremost, Ninety-Nines are women who love to fly. The organization as a whole and its individual Chapters worldwide provide a number of services. Among many activities, 99s organize air races, conduct air markings, provide pilot proficiency classes to their communities, promote aviation and space education, mentor aspiring general aviation and professional pilots, preserve the unique history of women in aviation through the Museum of Women Pilots in Oklahoma City and the Amelia Earhart Birthplace Museum in Atchison, Kansas, and offer aviation scholarships through local Chapters and the Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship Fund. The Ninety-Nines, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and able to accept tax deductible donations. The Headquarters is located on a two story building complex on six

acres at Will Rogers World Airport in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. It houses their archival records, video oral histories, personal artifacts, collections, memorabilia and biographical files on thousands of women pilots from around the world.

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Ventura County Ninety-Nines

The Ventura County Ninety-Nines, based in southern California, is part of the Southwest Section of The Ninety-Nines, Inc., a nonprofit organization of more than 5,100 women pilots. In 1973, the chapter was founded by six women pilots as the Santa Paula Chapter of The Ninety-Nines, Inc. In 1999, the name was changed to the Ventura County Chapter to reflect their expanding membership in Ventura County. As one of the largest Chapters in the organization today, membership has surpassed 100. To put this in perspective, one in 50 worldwide members of The Ninety-Nines is a member of the Ventura County Chapter. The membership includes general aviation pilots and professional pilots who fly for airlines, corporations, government entities and the movie industry. Some are military pilots, flight instructors, those who fly for enjoyment and student pilots. They are women who possess a wide range of talents and are willing to put them to use. As a Chapter, they have become recognized as leaders and strong supporters of many activities within Southwest Section and the International organization. The Ventura County Ninety-Nines is also one of the most active Chapters in the world. They host an annual Girl Scouts in Aviation Day, speaker programs for the local aviation community, paint air markings for local airports and organize a host of other aviation-related activities. The VC99s' Annual Pilot Proficiency Classes and Annual Silent Auction and Raffle enabled the Chapter to contribute significantly to the repair and maintenance of the International Headquarters and Museum of Women Pilots building in Oklahoma City, as well as fund a robust scholarship program. Currently the Chapter offers eight annual aviation scholarships. In addition, the Chapter endowed the VC99s' Perpetual Scholarship through the Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship Fund in 2006. The Ventura County Chapter is very proud to support the establishment of the Vicki Cruse Memorial Scholarship in memory of their beloved member.