

Helen Wyatt Snapp

Helen Wyatt Snapp, 94, of Pembroke Pines passed away January 20, 2013. She was genuine, opinionated and always on point. Family and friends were central to Helen's life; she treasured them as much as they adored her. Helen lived independently, loved travelling and was forever looking for adventures. Throughout her life, Helen remained very close to her three sisters and their families. Born in Washington, DC she attended Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, Virginia. In 1942, Helen married Ira Benton Snapp who was a Lieutenant in Company B 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Inf. Div. US Army during its campaigns in North Africa, Sicily and Italy.



During a summer break at college Helen started taking flying lessons with her sister Evelyn who also had a passion for flying. Overcoming a fear of heights, Helen entered the Civilian Pilot Training program where she acquired her private pilot's license. Shortly after Ben was sent overseas, Helen heard about the Women's AirForce Service Pilots training program and was accepted into the fourth training class 43-4-W4, at Avenger Field, Sweetwater, Texas. Helen wanted to fly pursuit planes and later became one of America's first female military aircraft aviators for the U.S. Women AirForce Service Pilots (WASP), which was a uniformed civilian position.

After graduating she was sent to Camp Davis, North Carolina. Her duties included aerial target towing for anti-aircraft training, search light training, radar operations, strafing exercises and she participated in the first drone development. Helen's last assignment would be at Liberty Field, Fort Stewart, Georgia. There she flew planes towing targets while teenaged male recruits fired live ammunition at the targets. Her final task in the service was a top secret mission with radio-controlled aircraft that would later be packed with explosives and used as the first guided bombs. Helen was thrilled to have piloted the B17, Memphis Belle, while travelling from Tampa to Jacksonville when the plane was being used for War Bond promotions.

After the war, Helen returned to Washington, DC area to raise three children while working for the US Post office. Eventually, the WASP's formed an organization and fought for recognition of their participation as military pilots in WW II. On March 11, 2010, Helen, along with the other 175 living members of the WASPs and relatives of the others were honored with the Congressional Gold Medal in Washington D.C. As a tireless aviation advocate, Helen traveled extensively promoting the values and efforts of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots. Helen was very active with the WASPS, Ninety-Nines, Wings Over Miami Air Museum and with other local women pilots. A talented speaker, Helen often spoke at military bases, universities, and flying events. She took delight in encouraging young people to pursue their dreams. Helen urged them to dream and strive without hesitation just as she had when she reached for the clouds at a moment in time when women did not fly planes.

Helen is survived by her beloved two sons, Jeremy and David, daughter-in-law Adriana, as well as her three grandchildren Robert, Benton, and Justin. Nephews and Nieces include Hal Henderson, Bob Henderson, Leilani Henderson, George Yates, Michael Yates, Larry Yates, Don Walker, Diane Walker, Christine Walker, Bobby Walker, Sue Taylor and Martha Hillegas.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, March 2, 2013 at 11 am at the Wings Over Miami Air Museum (www.wingsovermiami.com) at the Kendall Tamiami Executive Airport in Miami, Florida. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Wings Over Miami, 14710 SW 128th Street, Miami, FL 33196 or the Florida Gold Coast 99s, 880 N.E. 69 St. #4F, Miami, FL 33138.