

Team Wild Mama's Air Race Adventure

by Theresa White



Publisher's note:

In this issue of The Oklahoma Aviator we are bringing to light the availability of the Oklahoma Ninety-Nines chapter's Wings of the Future Scholarship. I put out the word that I would like some information about the effect of this award and received the following story from Theresa White. Her story is not only inspiring but also gives us a look at the workings of an event known as the Air Race Classic, a tradition carried on by women fliers since the first race held in 1929. Theresa's story is only one of thousands of stories about how aviation benefits when attitude and fortitude come together to create an aviator. Thanks for sharing, Theresa.

Earl Downs

What do you get when you mix together two cookie ladies, an airplane, and then add the spices of life? Terry Carbonell and I hope for a winning recipe as we team up to race *Wild Mama*, Terry's Cessna 182RG, from Boze-

man, Montana, to Mansfield, Massachusetts, in the 2008 Air Race Classic (ARC).

Terry and I met at the 2007 Air Race Classic, which had its official start in Oklahoma City last June. She arrived from Florida (with boxes of homemade cookies) as *Classic 9* for her first try at the historic Air Race. I was coordinating registration as a volunteer with the Oklahoma Chapter Ninety-Nines (99s), the host of the 2007 ARC start. During the four busy days leading up to the start, we had a few opportunities to visit and discovered we shared many things in common. For example, we both started flying later in life; we are both known for our home-baked cookies; we both love to fly, but hate to shop; and we both want some aviation adventure independent of the male pilots in our lives. The props started turning.

In August 2007 we were reunited for another aviation event, the annual Okie Derby Air Proficiency Race, sponsored by the Oklahoma Chapter 99s. This time we

competed against each other. Terry won the most prizes, but the best prize was the decision for us to team up for the 2008 ARC, a 2,011 nautical mile cross-country race; the perfect aviation adventure for us.

Terry started flying at the age of 44 at the request of her husband, a private pilot, now afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. Terry had done many things in her life, from practicing law to demolishing buildings to farming. Scuba diving is a favorite past time of hers, but flying had



Team Wild Mama with Terry Carbonell on the left and me on the right.

never been a great ambition. Knowing what flying meant to her husband, though, she decided to give it a try. She says she did not take to flying easily; the development of wings has been an evolutionary process that has taken time. But, take to it she did, and now after less than three years, she has logged more than 900 hours, earned an instrument rating, a commercial rating, and will soon begin tail-wheel training in her newly adopted Citabria. Following the completion of ARC, she plans to earn a seaplane rating. With lots of help from other pilots, instructors, and friends, she

likes to say her flight feathers have become fully developed. She looks forward to a long love affair with life above this earth, still living her life's mantra of "Never let fear alone stop you."

I had held on to a dream of flying since I was young, but had no exposure to it other than flying in commercial airliners. After

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Wild Mama's...

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my three boys were all in school, I went to work for the Air Force and then the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) where more and more I was exposed to the world of aviation. Then one day I decided it was time to try it myself.

Until my introductory flying lesson in 2003, I had never been in a small airplane. So, like Terry, learning to fly was a bit of a challenge--becoming comfortable with that vertical dimension, learning all those new concepts, and coming to terms with those invisible rocks in the sky while I was becoming a grandmother.

For me, the best thing about aviation is that it has really expanded my world and introduced me to the most amazing people in Oklahoma and around the world. My job in international training at the FAA

Academy gives me the opportunity to meet aviation professionals from many countries. And my involvement with the Oklahoma Chapter Ninety-Nines has provided support, inspiration, friendship, fun, and in 2005...money!

After the flight school I was attending went out of business, taking my money with it, I had to postpone my training. I kept studying and got involved with the 99s, who were my inspiration to continue my pursuit. In 2005 I applied for and won the Okie Derby "Wings of the Future" scholarship funded by the Oklahoma Chapter 99s and numerous local sponsors, which helped me complete my private pilot training in September 2005.

I continue to fly as often as possible, participate and volunteer in many aviation events and activities, and I'm an active member in several aviation organizations, including the Oklahoma Pilots Association where I serve as membership chair. The

opportunity to join Terry in the Air Race Classic is truly a dream come true for me.

The 2008 Air Race Classic will mark 79 years since the first all-women's air race. The race will cover just over 2,000 nautical miles, touching nine airports and must be completed in VFR conditions in 4 days. Terry and I feel it is both an honor and a privilege to be part of such a rich history in women's aviation, and we look forward to the challenges and camaraderie with the other female pilots.

We have already begun preparations for the June 2008 race: getting team jerseys, planning our strategy, and creating a web site, www.teamwildmama.com. We have even created our own special team cookie for the event called Wild Mama and Nuts Cookies; a secret mix of special ingredients that we think is aptly named for the team! And just recently, ARC announced race numbers for early entrants, and Team Wild Mama's number will be

Classic 11; that's two number 1's, in our opinion!

As with any aviation-related activity, racing is expensive. Terry and I are raising money for our adventure by raffling aviation quilts (handmade by Terry), baking cookies, and we are also accepting team sponsorships. Sponsors receive, depending on the level of sponsorship, recognition and a corporate link and logo on the website, which is linked to the ARC website, a decal logo displayed on *Wild Mama* during the race, an ad in the official 2008 ARC program (deadline March 15). For sponsors of \$1,000 or more, their corporate name will be embroidered on one set of racing jerseys.

More details are available on the website. Anyone interested in going beyond a team sponsorship to support ARC in general may e-mail: sponsors@airraceclassic.org, or visit the corporate website at: www.airraceclassic.org.

The Bush Administration released its proposed budget for fiscal year (FY) 2009, and it contains more of the same bad medicine for general aviation (GA). The White House continues to push for cuts in programs vital to smaller airports, while continuing to show an apparent prejudice towards airlines. It's the same old proposal of high taxes and user fees advanced for FY 2008. That's the same high tax and user fee plan Congress already rejected.

Publisher's Rant by Earl Downs

the traffic. In the past, AIP funding reductions have hit small airports harder than the large air-carrier airports.

DOT Secretary Mary Peters said, "If last-year's record traffic jams and flight delays taught us anything, it is that traditional approaches are not capable of producing the results we need to

time, they can't land in formation on the same runway! The problem with airline travel is a *lack of airline-capable runways and bad airline and airport management*. It has nothing to do with general aviation, and GA should not have to support government and airline mismanagement of the problem.

Oklahoma Aviator readers need to pay attention to the new wave of political nonsense we are going to hear regarding general aviation. We are cannon fodder for both political parties



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