

Ruth Franckling Reynolds

1919-2007



Ruth was born in New Rochelle on January 12, 1919 and grew up in Woodstock helping her father deliver milk in the early morning hours. After graduation from high school she began taking flying lessons and in 1941 became the first woman in Ulster County to earn a commercial pilot's license. Ruth spent the next year flying frequent charter trips and in 1942 obtained her instructor's rating. That fall she was accepted into the Women's Air Force Service Pilots program and spent the next few years ferrying planes. It was during this time that she met fellow WASP Martha, who became a dear lifelong friend. The disbanding of the WASP in 1944 was devastating to all of the women. They returned to ordinary lives after performing extra-ordinary duties. Ruth returned to her home in Woodstock, and resumed her previous job as a flight instructor at the Kingston Airport. In 1946 she married one of her students, Ward Reynolds, and they settled on the farm in Halcott Center. They flew from their airstrip and Ruth continued instructing and giving plane rides to Halcott residents. Ward and Ruth spent the next few decades raising kids and milking cows.

Today I saw an airplane away up in the sky
I thought of my grandmother when she flew them fast and high.
Young and fresh, and far from home a thousand women try
The old and gruff instructor says
"You'll learn this well, or die."

She climbs into the cockpit and she pulls her helmet down
The tired old engine catches and she gets it off the ground
It sputters, coughs, then starts again; she flies it high and well
This bucket full of holes that someone else has flown through hell.

Oh but she loves the life up in the sky, and she knows just what to do
And yes she loves the planes and loves to fly,
it's the best thing she'll ever do.

The last thing that she told me was the day before she died
She said wouldn't it have been something, girl,
If I could've taught you how to fly?

Oh don't ya know, Gram through my whole life
You taught me how to fly...

"The women would delight in jumping down from the plane,
taking off their helmets, and walking past the astonished men
who'd just witnessed a perfect landing."



Gingerbread men at Christmas
Making sugar people with small candy eyes
Your animal shaped pancakes each morning
Your cookies and, goodness, your pies.

On your knees tending flowers and veggies
In the fields picking berries galore
Always winning at Pinnacle and Scrabble
Always smiling when we'd walk through the door.

At night, you would sit at our bedside
Read us stories and help say our prayers
Please Lord wake us at dawn and protect us
Now dawn comes and you're no longer here.

We miss you, we do, but we're happy
You're here inside, and smiling above
We'll remember you always, our Grammy
From Claire and Josh, with love.

Dear Friends,

*Thank you for coming.
Just take my hand and say goodbye.
No tears, please.
I had a wonderful life, a full life.
Keep in touch with my wonderful family.*

Ruth

