



Norma S. Walker

February 13, 1927 - February 16, 2013

Norma S. Walker, of Prescott Valley, AZ, died Saturday, February 16, after a three year struggle with Alzheimer's Disease.

She was born February 13, 1927 in Brea, Orange County, CA to Ralph and Viola Swoap.

Flying and all things related to aircraft and space exploration were passions for Norma. While her (adored) late brother Arthur was flying for the U. S. Marines in the Pacific Theater of World War II, she earned her private pilot's license in 1943, at the age of 16. She was taking driving lessons from the next door neighbor at the time, and she made sure part of several driving lessons involved going to the Fullerton airport for flying lessons. She got her pilot's license before she got her driver's license.

After World War II she got a job flying Stearman pilot-training aircraft from Arizona to Long Beach, CA. The planes were open-cockpit bi-planes; navigation then was by map and road and some times by golly. In her first ferrying mission from Arizona, she was the last of the flight group to arrive in Long Beach. It was night, and she landed by dint of the car headlights of her flight instructor, who'd recommended her for the job. In August, 1952, she joined the Civil Air Patrol. She had 14 years continuous service in the Civil Air Patrol, leaving in 1966 with the rank of Major.

Norma enjoyed a 26 year career with Northrop Aircraft Corporation, breaking the “glass ceiling” long before that term was being used. Thanks to her “initiative, versatility, willingness to work, and dependable accuracy” (an early evaluation) she steadily rose in the ranks from Statistician, to Budget Analyst, to Statistical Analyst, to Research Analyst, to Operations Research Specialist, to Manager-Data Administration, Integrated Logistics Support (Aircraft Division). She was the first female manager of Integrated Logistics Support at Northrup Aircraft, a major division responsible for the maintainability and reliability of Northrup aircraft. That division was a traditional male bastion until Norma got there.

While at Northrop she was the recipient of a number of Certificates of Achievement and was elected an officer in the Northrop Management club in 1979. She retired in February 1981 with a large (and fairly raucous) party, and much recognition for her years of loyal and distinguished service.

Throughout her career and into retirement, Norma enjoyed one of her other passions – world travel. She was particularly happy to have been able to travel to Japan, a country and culture that she found most fascinating.

Norma is survived by her son, Thomas Walker (Theresa) of San Francisco, CA, sister Enid Earll of Susanville, CA, Enid’s children Kim ("Kimmer") Earll, Susanville, CA, and Kenneth Earll (Dorothy) Susanville, CA, and their children and grandchildren, brother J. R. Swoap, of Bluffton, S. C., his sons Bill, Bob, David and Steven, and their children and grandchildren. Pre-deceased by her brother, Earl Swoap, late of Las Vegas, NV, Norma is survived by his sons, David, Paul and Tony.

Norma’s favorite poem.

“Oh, I have slipped the surly bounds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I’ve climbed and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds – and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of – wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence.
Hov’ring there
I’ve chased the shouting wind along and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long delirious burning blue
I’ve topped the wind – swept heights with easy grace;
Where never lark, or even eagle, flew:
And, while with silent, lifting mind I’ve trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.”

“High Flight” by John Gillespie Magee, Jr.