

AMELIA EARHART MEDAL
AWARDED TO MARGARET LITTLEWOOD
SECRETARY TO REGIONAL DIRECTOR
AES WESTERN REGION

Through the years many articles have been written about Margaret Littlewood, our Senior Secretary in Western Region. Again in April 1976, articles appeared in the Toronto Sun, the Toronto Star, two articles in the Edmonton Journal etc.

Here are the facts

A native of Toronto, Margaret found a job with the T. Eaton Co. upon completion of school and was involved with Eaton's catalogue mail order business.

One of Margaret's close friends named Marion Gillies had an illustrious father who founded and operated Gillies Flying Service at Barker Field in Toronto.

Mr. Gillies enthusiasm for aviation rubbed off on Marion and Margaret and in order to publicize the Gillies Flying Service, both girls were given flying lessons. This was in 1938 and both girls not only qualified for their Private Pilot Licenses but went on to Commercial and Instructor ratings and served as flying instructors at the school. Having learned to fly in a Piper Cub Margaret taught flying in a wide range of single engine aircraft including Piper Cubs, Gypsy Moths, Aeroncas, Reid Ramblers etc. This activity terminated in late 1942 when gasoline rationing curtailed activities at private flying schools during World War 2.

By this time Margaret had the real flying bug and sought employment in some capacity associated with aviation. She applied to all ten Air Observer Schools (AOS) which were operating in Canada as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in World War 2. Nine schools rejected Margaret on the grounds that a woman just wouldn't be suitable in their operations. However the General Manager of No. 2 AOS Edmonton, Capt. W.R. "Wop" May phoned Margaret to discuss her qualifications and offered her a job as Link Trainer Instructor. Margaret gleefully accepted the job and headed West full of wonderment at what a Link Trainer would look like.

Margaret's role at No. 2 AOS was the provision of Link Trainer instruction for radio range procedures and advanced instrument flying. She trained pilots of the AOS, other pilots who were enroute overseas with the Allied Forces and CPA pilots (CPA leased some time at the school). A total of more than 140 pilots received Link instruction from Margaret.

Subsequent to the war Margaret took a position as secretary with the Post Office Department. Still bent on flying she completed her training for the ultimate – the Public Transport Pilot Licence – at the Edmonton Flying Club. She says she just wanted to prove to herself that she could do it, and became the third woman ever to hold this license.

Amelia Earhart was the first president of the International Organization of Licensed Women Pilots called The Ninety-Nines Inc. The name is derived from the number of charter members who founded the organization in 1929. This organization offers Amelia Earhart Medals in recognition of outstanding achievement in aviation and also sponsors scholarship awards for advanced flight training or specialized courses in aviation.

On April 21, 1976 at a luncheon in Toronto the Eastern Canada Section Ninety-Nines Inc. honoured Margaret for her pioneering in aviation and in particular for her contributions to aviation during World War 2 when she worked for “Wop” May as Link Trainer Instructor at the AOS. She was the first and only woman Link Trainer Instructor in Canadian history. Margaret was presented with the Amelia Earhart Medallion for her achievements.

We in the Western Region are proud of our Margaret’s achievements. Before leaving for Toronto to accept the honour, AES Senior Managers presented Margaret with a floral arrangement (carnations) as a send-off. The event was a buffet dinner hosted by Gwen and George Legg. Special guests for the evening included Larry Campbell, Director General of Field Services, Commodore Doug Learoyd, Regional Director of the PSC with wife Joyce, and Mrs. Ruth (Kelly) Symons, Environment Canada’s Area Personnel Manager and her new husband Bart.

Margaret moved up to Meteorology in 1961 and has served as Secretary to the Regional Meteorologist/Regional Director in the Western Region, the position which she presently holds. She is still aviation minded and has agreed to donate to the Western Aviation Museum her log books, press clippings and souvenirs such as the propeller off the Piper Cub 40 she learned to fly (the propeller now houses a clock in her Mother’s suburban Toronto home).



*Margaret Littlewood Displays Medal after Presentation.
Margaret Littlewood montre la médaille après la présentation.*



*Amelia Earhart Medal.
La médaille Amelia Earhart.*