

Amelia Earhart (1887-1937)

She broke women's aviation records.

The little girl was excited as she skipped from one booth to another at the Iowa State Fair. She spotted a crowd and wanted to see what they were looking at. She peeked between dozens of tall legs. The crowd was looking at an airplane, the first they had ever seen. She thought it was ugly and went back to a booth to buy a pretty paper hat. Her name was Amelia Earhart. She was 10 years old.

When she was 22, Amelia did fall in love with airplanes. She took her first plane ride at an air meet in California. The 10-minute ride convinced her that this was what she wanted to do. She would become a pilot. Three years later Amelia broke the women's altitude record by flying to a height of 14,000 feet.

Newspapers ran stories about this daring woman pilot. George Putnam, a New York publisher, read the news stories. He asked Amelia to come and see him. He would furnish the money to make her the first woman to fly across the Atlantic.

Amelia did make the flight, but she did not pilot the plane. Two male pilots flew through bad weather and dense fog to finally land in South Wales. The newspapers went wild. Amelia tried to tell the reporters that she had only been a passenger. She insisted that the credit for the flight should go to the pilots. The reporters didn't listen.

Amelia was a heroine in the U. S. More than ever she was determined to pilot her own plane. She flew alone from one coast to the other. She began the "Powder Puff Derby," a cross-country air race for women. In 1932, Amelia did fly across the Atlantic alone breaking both time and distance records. Other records followed until Amelia felt she was ready for the biggest flight of her career - she would fly around the world!

In 1937, Amelia and her navigator, Fred Noonan, took off on their around-the-world flight. They were never heard from again. Word came that the plane had disappeared somewhere in the Pacific. Search planes were sent out, but no trace of Amelia's plane was found. There are many guesses as to what happened. Did the plane crash in the Pacific Ocean? Did the plane land on an island where the Japanese captured Fred and Amelia?