



December 18, 2014

Fellow Twirly Birds:

Please mark your 2015 calendars. The Twirly Bird reception at Heli-Expo in Orlando, Florida will be held on March 3 following the first exhibition day. The reception will start at 17:00 in the Lake Mizzell room of the Hilton Hotel.

We are proud and pleased to announce that long time Twirly Bird, Nancy Miller Livingston Stratford, will be the recipient of the Les Morris award. Nancy received her helicopter rating in 1947 which certainly qualifies her as a pioneer helicopter pilot. Please see the attached biography authored by Twirly Bird, Marty Pociask, for Rotor Magazine.

Nancy will bring some of her books to the reception and be available to autograph them. If you plan to purchase a book, please send me a note or leave a phone message so that we will have an adequate supply on hand. Steve Sullivan [srs@jma.com](mailto:srs@jma.com) 408 348 5780

For those of you are not on our e-mail list, we have also attached a Twirly Bird Roster. And if you have an e-mail address that we may use in the future, please send it to me or Dennis MacBain.

Please send me your news, and updates for this newsletter. Your fellow pioneer helicopter pilots would appreciate hearing from you.

DUES: Annual dues are \$10.00. Dues are used to pay for mailing the newsletter to those Twirly Birds who have not provided an e-mail address. Dues are also used to buy TB pins, TB certificates and partially fund the reception at Heli-Expo. Please send your dues to Treasurer Dennis MacBain, 4525 Leon Street, San Diego, CA 92107

Remember that the Twirly Birds have funded an endowment at the University of Texas at Dallas for the Twirly Bird Archives. Please consider sending your records, papers and memorabilia to be preserved and cared for in the Twirly Bird Archives.

Twirly Bird Archive Contact:

Paul A. Oelkrug  
Coordinator for Special Collections  
The University of Texas at Dallas  
800 West Campbell Road MC33  
Richardson, Texas 75080-3021

BEST WISHES FOR THE HOLIDAYS AND  
KEEP YOUR ROTOR IN THE GREEN!

Steve Sullivan



Jim Atkins, 95, former president of Bell Helicopter Corporation and chairman of Bell Helicopter Textron, died Monday, Nov. 17, 2014, at his home in Fort Worth. Funeral: Mass of Christian Burial will begin at 1 p.m. Friday at St. Andrew Catholic Church. Interment: Greenwood Memorial Park. Visitation: 3 to 5 p.m. Thursday at Thompson's Harveson & Cole. Memorials: Should friends desire, memorials, in lieu of flowers, may be given to The [American Cancer Society](#)

or The Wounded Warrior Project. James Frederick Atkins was born Dec. 4, 1918, in Buffalo, N.Y., and graduated from Canisius College while working in the Treasury Department for Bell. He married Elizabeth Marie Shields in 1948 and together they had four children. Mr. Atkins devoted his entire professional career to Bell Helicopter with the exception of a three-year leave of absence (1942-1945) to serve in the [Army](#) Air Corps. In 1952 he was promoted to chief accountant of Bell's new Helicopter Division and made the move from Buffalo, N.Y., to the Dallas/Fort Worth area to build a new helicopter facility. Over the next 30 years, Jim held a succession of titles including controller, secretary-treasurer and executive vice president until his appointment as president of Bell and finally executive vice president of Textron Corporation in 1972. Mr. Atkins will be particularly remembered as the visionary who championed development of a tilt-rotor aircraft, for establishing major international sales and co-production programs and for Bell's successful transition from a military supplier to a supplier of both military and commercial products. Mr. Atkins retired in December 1984 after being named chairman of Bell Helicopter. He was preceded in death by his wife, Elizabeth Shields Atkins. Survivors: Mr. Atkins leaves behind his loving wife, Helen Vittorini Atkins; his children, James Frederick Atkins Jr. and his wife, Margaret Ann, Mary Elizabeth Widmer and husband, Bill, Kathryn Ann McCoy and husband, Matt, and Susan Atkins Brown and husband, Garry; nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Twirly Bird Jim Atkins was a respected leader in the helicopter industry. Jim's contributions to military helicopter development and support were acknowledged and recognized by numerous organizations including the Helicopter Association International.

## **Nancy Miller Livingston Stratford: Twirly Bird, Whirly-Girl, and Trailblazing Aviatrix**

Nancy Jane Miller was born on June 12, 1919, in Los Angeles, California. On her 16th birthday, her brother presented her with a surprise gift: a sightseeing flight over the city. Afterwards, Nancy asked her father numerous times for permission to take flight lessons but was denied. After attending L.A. High School where she played sports and wrote for the school newspaper, Nancy attended college with plans to be a schoolteacher.

In the fall of 1939, Nancy transferred from Occidental College to the University of California at Berkeley. As part of its preparations for the coming war, the U.S. government was promoting pilot training through its Civilian Pilot Training Program, and it was announced that 10 women would be accepted, along with 110 men. Nancy rushed to sign up, but as she was not yet 21, she once again had to ask her father for permission. This time he relented. Nancy and the other women were assigned to West Moreau at Oakland Airport. She trained from December 1939 to May 1940, receiving her private pilot's certificate from the Civil Aeronautics Authority, the forerunner to the FAA.

Nancy obtained her fixed-wing commercial license and flight instructor ratings in 1941 at Central Airport in L.A. She immediately went to work as an instructor for another operator on the field. That assignment was short: Pearl Harbor was attacked two weeks later, on December 7, 1941. The Civilian Pilot Training Program moved inland, to Bishop, California (flights in a zone spanning 50 miles from the Pacific coast were restricted), and Nancy continued working as an instructor for the program.

At the outbreak of World War II, there were no female pilots in the U.S. military services. Nancy heard of some women flying in England — and also that renowned aviatrix Jacqueline Cochran was recruiting American pilots for the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA). The ATA used civilian pilots to ferry military aircraft from factories, repair and maintenance facilities, and so on, freeing up military pilots for combat missions. After meeting Cochran in L.A., Nancy traveled to Montreal, Canada, for a checkout on an AT-6 Harvard, and then onto a cargo ship, the Winnipeg II, to cross in convoy to Liverpool, England, arriving in June 1942. She was one of 27 American women to fly with ATA — twenty-four chosen by Cochran and three who joined ATA on their own.

Nancy underwent some ground school and flight checkout in the Miles Magister, the British trainer, and went to White Waltham Airfield for advanced training. There, under supervision, she began to learn the forms and procedures for ferrying various types of single-engine aircraft.

Nancy was first stationed at Hamble, near Southampton, and later at Prestwick, Scotland. One of two ATA stations staffed entirely by women, Hamble was located near Spitfire factories, and Nancy and her fellow pilots

ferried a great number of these aircraft to maintenance units, and to squadrons. With the help of excellent “handling notes”, they also ferried, solo, other single-engine aircraft such as the Swordfish, Proctor, Albacore, Barracuda, and Hurricane. This was without radios or other navigational aids — just good maps, often under extremely poor weather conditions! After a couple of months, Nancy received a short checkout in the light twin-engine British Oxford. Later she also had a conversion to medium twins in the Wellington bomber. Her final conversion was on a Lockheed Hudson for so-called Class 4+, which allowed her to fly nearly everything available as “PIC” (Pilot-in-Command), except four-engine aircraft. She logged almost 900 flight hours, ferried 35 different types of single-engine aircraft, and 15 twin-engine planes, of which nine were for short “progressive” checkouts, and forty-one solo first time up! Included in her list, was her favorite, the Spitfire, especially Marks XI and XIV. The list of aircraft Nancy flew includes many variants of the Spitfire, the P-51 Mustang, the F4U Corsair, the Mosquito bomber, as well as the Hurricane, Tempest, and Typhoon fighters. She also flew the Douglas C-47 Dakota, B-25 Mitchell, F4F Wildcat, F6F Hellcat, and even the British Dominie, a light twin-engine that was used a great deal by the British for air transportation. Other interesting aircraft included the Fairchild 24 and twin-engine Anson, which were used as taxi aircraft, taking ATA pilots to their starting points and back to base after completing deliveries.

In those days, a pilot’s headgear consisted of a leather helmet with goggles. The parachute was packed away in its bag, and the pilots carried it along with a small overnight bag in case they got “stuck out” overnight. They wore the parachute in their ferry aircraft, where it also became the seat. The female pilots were fully accepted at the ATA, given equal opportunities to fly all types of aircraft and equal pay — unusual for that day, or any day! Eight British women ferried 4-engines, as PIC, with a non-pilot flight engineer (no co-pilots).

After the war, many pilots found it difficult to find work in commercial aviation, and this was especially true for female pilots. In 1947, Nancy ended up at the airport in Corvallis, Oregon. The air taxi company had a contract with Oregon State College in Corvallis — now Oregon State University — to offer flight instruction to some of its ROTC students under the GI Bill.

From 1947 to 1960, Nancy worked in many capacities as an instructor in both ground and flight school and as director of training. She also delivered aircraft, worked as a crop duster for 10 years in a Stearman 450, and performed at air shows — anything to keep flying. Other duties included bookkeeping, janitorial duties, and stoking the furnace!

Nancy had earned her helicopter and seaplane ratings in 1947, becoming the first woman on the West Coast to receive a commercial helicopter rating, the second in the United States, and the fourth in the world. She had about 13 hours in a Bell 47 BS on floats and 14 hours in a Bell 47B. She also

received one hour of instruction by Carl Brady, Alaska helicopter aviation pioneer and founder of Era Helicopters, just after he had received his rating! There was little work for choppers back then, and Nancy didn't get back to flying them again until 1956. She married pilot J. Arlo Livingston that year, and together they founded Livingston Copters in Oregon, flying photo missions, sightseeing tours, and transporting skiers. In addition to her pilot duties, Nancy served as bookkeeper, administrative assistant, and vice president of the company.

In the summer of 1959, the U.S. Geological Survey offered Livingston Copters three months of work out of Ketchikan, Alaska. When Arlo returned, he said Alaska was the place for choppers and that he wanted to move to Juneau the next year. So they did!

Arlo bid on some U.S. Geological Survey contracts in Alaska and won two. In June 1960, he hired pilots, added two Hiller 12Es, and set up a base on Douglas Island, in the Juneau area.

Nancy was the first woman helicopter bush pilot in Alaska. As she described it, "At the time it wasn't 'decent' for women to be out in the field two or three months with all these males!"

Once again, besides local flights, Nancy did whatever needed doing: radio work, bookkeeping, scheduling, ordering parts and keeping inventory, managing the maintenance logs, janitorial services, and so on. During the first few winters, she also alternated with Arlo on taking residents to the base of the ski tow. One of her trips onto the Mendenhall Glacier was with Sir Edmund Hillary of New Zealand, an adventurer in his own right who made the first summit of Mt. Everest!

Nancy retired in 1978, as her hearing was deteriorating after years of exposure to engine noise. At her retirement, she had about 8,500 total flight hours in 103 types of aircraft, including about 1,500 hours in helicopters. Most of those were as pilot in command and instructor.

Nancy and Arlo sold Livingston Copters to Era Helicopters in 1977. At almost 70, Arlo thought retirement might be a good thing. He passed away in 1986. Arlo was a past president of the Helicopter Association of America (now Helicopter Association International), a Twirly Bird member, and a charter member of the Men's Auxiliary of the Whirly-Girls.

The Whirly-Girls were formed in 1955 by Jean Ross Howard Phelan, who wanted to build a community where female helicopter pilots could share and grow. There were 13 original members for the organization, headed by No. 1, Hanna Reitsch of Germany. Ann Shaw Carter, the first female U.S. commercial pilot was No. 2, and private pilot Pat Swenson was No. 3. Nancy was charter member No. 4. Today the Whirly-Girls has more than 1,700 members in 45 countries and operates a program that awards to female pilots a variety of scholarships valued in excess of \$90,000.

In 1988, Nancy founded the Whirly-Girls Livingston Award in Arlo's memory. The award is given annually to a living woman helicopter pilot and member of the Whirly-Girls who has contributed in a significant way to the

advancement, recognition, and credit of women in helicopter aviation. Nancy also sponsors a Mountain Flying scholarship for the Whirly-Girls. Nancy married retired banker Milton Stratford in 1991 but was widowed again in 2008. She now lives in Carlsbad, California, near San Diego. In 2002 Nancy received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Whirly-Girls for her contributions over the years. In addition to the Whirly-Girls, Nancy is also a member of the Twirly Birds, Silver Wings, 99s, Women in Aviation and, through her wartime service, the British Air Transport Auxiliary. Nancy was invited in 2008 by the British government to return to London to receive the Air Transport Auxiliary Veterans Badge from then Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Nancy was the only surviving member of the original group of 24 women recruited by Jacqueline Cochran. Also attending were 51 surviving pilots, engineers, and ground personnel who also served in the ATA during the war. In 2011, Nancy authored *Contact! Britain! A Woman Ferry Pilot's Story during WWII in England*, a 220-page account of her ATA service. The book is available through <https://www.createspace.com/3479823> or Amazon, where it has a 4.9 out of a 5.0 rating.

*This profile of Nancy Miller Livingston Stratford is part of an interview that will appear in the HFI Heritage Series in ROTOR magazine. ©2014 Helicopter Association International. Reproduced with permission of the publisher.*