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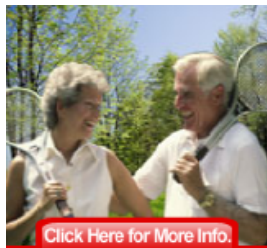
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Josephine Swift

OCTOBER 31, 2010

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PORT TOWNSEND, Wash. — Josephine "Jo" (Keating) Swift, 90, a decorated World War II Women's Airforce pilot, died of natural causes Aug. 28 in Port Townsend, Wash.



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Private services were held Sept. 3 in Seattle. A celebration of her life took place Sept. 19 at the Museum of Flight in Seattle. Mount Olivet Cemetery, Inc., of Renton, Wash., was in charge of arrangements.

Jo was born Sept. 24, 1919, in Great Falls, to James E. and Mary J. Keating. After graduating high school in 1936, she went on to earn a bachelor's degree in medical technology. During that time, in her own words, "Great Falls was a hotbed of stunt fliers, crop dusters, barnstormers and flight schools. It must have been the \$2 plane ride with my brother that gave me a start as a pilot ... that or the chance to wear scarves and goggles." So, at 22, she learned to fly and obtained her private pilot's license.

In wartime 1943, Jo applied for the experimental Women's Airforce Service Pilots. Of the 25,000 who applied, she was one of the elite 1,074 who finished. She traveled to Sweetwater, Texas, where she began her training as a bomber pilot. She learned to fly the B-24, B-25 and B-26, among others. A flight crew on their way to combat named their bomber "Red the Wasp" after the red-haired beauty, and Jo searched all her life hoping to find out what happened to that crew.

After deactivation of the WASP in 1944, Jo returned to Montana to work as a flight instructor in Billings. It was there that she met her soon-to-be husband, Ken Swift, a bush pilot from Alaska. They were married in 1946. The Swifts moved to Seattle and started a family.

After raising her children, Jo went to work in market research at Boeing. She moved on to vice president of a leasing company in Bellevue and eventually moved to Anchorage, Alaska, where she opened a branch office. After six years Jo returned to Seattle where she retired to be closer to her family.

In March 2010, Jo and her entire family traveled to Washington, D.C., where Jo was presented the Congressional Gold Medal awarded to the WASP for their service.



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Josephine is survived by her three children, Candy Raab (Pete) of Quilcene, Wash., Pam Goetz (Lori) of Ketchum, Idaho, and Jim Swift (Cheryl) of Seattle, Wash.; her stepson, Ken Swift of Carson City, Nev.; brother James Keating of Anacortes, Wash.; and sister-in-law, Marie Keating of Great Falls; 17 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband Ken in 1970; and her brother John "Jack" Keating in 1985.

Condolences may be posted online at www.gftribune.com/obituaries.

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