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Margaret Ray Ringenberg 1921 ~ 2008

Female WW II pilot ferried military planes

She caught the flying bug as an 8-year-old farm girl in Indiana, and in 1941 completed her first solo flight

Tribune staff report

July 29, 2008

OSHKOSH, Wis. — Margaret Ray Ringenberg, a World War II pilot from Indiana who continued to fly into her 80s, has died. She was 87.

Ms. Ringenberg, of Ft. Wayne, Ind., died Monday while in Oshkosh for the Experimental Aircraft Association AirVenture fly-in and convention.

Winnebago County Deputy Coroner Shelley Donner said Ms. Ringenberg died of natural causes.

"It looks like she went to bed last night and just didn't wake up this morning," he said.

Ms. Ringenberg ferried military planes across the country during World War II before serving as a flight instructor and competing in numerous air races, including an around-the-world race at age 72.

Her adventures earned her a chapter in Tom Brokaw's "The Greatest Generation," a book documenting heroes of the World War II era.

Ms. Ringenberg got the bug to fly when she was 8 years old and a barnstorming pilot landed in a field near her family's farm in northeastern Indiana. After she graduated from high school, she was resigned to becoming a flight attendant—thinking that was the only job on airplanes available for women.

During World War II, however, flight schools suffered a shortage of students as men were drafted. She was 19 when she flew solo the first time in 1941.



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The advertisement features a banner with the text 'GET OUT & GRILL!' in a stylized font, with 'Dominick's' in the top right corner. Below the banner, the text 'Grill with us all summer long.' is displayed. Underneath, there are four small images of different grill items: a burger, a fish steak, a watermelon slice, and a bowl of salad. At the bottom, there is a call to action: '↑ Roll over the pics to get hungry' and a button that says 'Get Grilling ▶'.

Then she joined the Women's Air Force Service Pilots, in which women pilots were hired to fly military aircraft on non-combat missions.

When the war wound down, she returned to the Ft. Wayne area.

She married banker Morris Ringenberg in 1946 and took a job answering phones at the airport. In the 1950s, she began racing and giving flying lessons.

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