

# Memorial Obituary

Saturday, February 23, 2008

## Alice Eugenia 'Genie' Chilcoat Updike

ORO VALLEY, Ariz. — Wednesday, February 20, 2008, Alice Eugenia "Genie" Chilcoat Updike left this Earth on her final flight, she was 87 years old. The former WASP pilot, airline stewardess, restaurateur, and super mom was greeted upon her heavenly landing by: her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, her husband, Robert Earl Updike Sr., daughter, Alice Joy Updike, parents Paul Benton and Annie Ewing Chilcoat, brothers Read Benton and Fredrick Ewing Chilcoat, and numerous other relatives and friends.

Born in Muskogee, Okla., August 20, 1920, Genie graduated from Muskogee Central High School in 1938, and attended the University of Arkansas for the next two years, just long enough to qualify for flying school. In 1939, at the ripe old age of 19, Genie became the first woman to earn a pilot's license in Muskogee County. Because World War II depleted the ranks of pilots available in the states the Women's Army Service



Pilots was created allowing daring and adventure-some women to serve their country by towing target planes, and ferrying bombers and other aircraft to and from different bases in the states. Scooting in just over the height requirement of 5'2", she was 5'2 1/2". Genie joined that rank of pioneers trained in Sweetwater, Texas, and served her country until 1944. She received an Honorable Discharge from the Air Force in 1979.

Finding that flying within the sights of sloppy, target practicing pilots was just a little too exciting, she decided that another form of flying would be fun. Western Airlines had just rescinded the requirement for all stewardesses to be registered nurses and this job called to Genie's sense of adventure. Her family always joked that no one should stand between her and the door if someone said, "Let's go ..." Being based in Cheyenne, Wyo., and serving passengers that flew between Denver, Great Falls, Mont., and Huron, SD, meant flying what today we would call a milk run, but Genie looked upon her days as a "stew" as wonderful and exciting. She and the flight crew would often overnight in Rapid City, SD, staying at the Rushmore Motel. In June of 1946, Robert Earl Updike, the son of the motel owners, Earl and Ella Updike, carried Genie's bags to her room, asked her for a date and the two were married eight weeks later on August 18, 1946. Robert had been a Marine pilot during World War II, and flying was an important part of the draw between these two members of the Greatest Generation.

Genie and Bob made their home in Rapid City for the next 24 years, except for a brief sojourn in Pierre from 1950-1951, where their second daughter Alice Joy was born. All of their other children: Constance Marie in 1948, Robert Earl, Jr. in 1954, and William George in 1961 were born in Rapid City. From 1952 to 1964, Genie and Bob owned and operated the Zesto Drive In and Restaurant. In 1969 Genie helped John Welsh start Silver Wings Aviation and in 1970, renewed her pilot's license at the age of 50. Moving to Alexandria, Minn., in 1972, so Bob could be more

centrally located within his sales territory they made their home in the wilds of the 10,000 lakes for the next few years. Bob Sr. died suddenly December 14, 1973, and Alice Joy was killed in a car accident in July 1975.

Returning to her native Oklahoma in the spring of 1976, Genie and her youngest son, Bill, bought a home in Tulsa and resided there until 1990. To provide for her son and herself Genie found employment with Allied Bearing Supply. Always, the cheerful and most pleasant part of her personality was presented to the customers



Updike



Updike

who called at the manufacturing and distributing plant. Genie retired in 1989, but continued to be part of the Allied family always being invited to office parties or stepping in when the replacement receptionist needed time off. From 1990 to 1995, Genie made her home with her sister, Joy Boyer in Santa Paula, Calif. The lemon and avocado orchards next door were never the same after she and Joy returned to Tulsa in 1995.

Genie's children were always grateful when they could share their homes with her. In 1997, daughter Connie and her husband, Larry Wilson, purchased a four bedroom house in Houston, and she became a central and inspiring figure in their household. By the year 2002, the desert in southern Arizona had become son Bill's home and she moved to Tucson in October of that year. From 2002 to February 20, 2008, Bill and Genie shared a home in Oro Valley, Ariz., just north of Tucson. She and Bill were active members of the Canyon del Oro Baptist Church.

Following several months of illness and being confined to hospitals from December 26, 2007, to February 16, 2008, Alice Eugenia Chilcoat Updike filed her final flight plans. She died at her home with William and Constance in attendance. Her son, Robert Jr. is a civilian computer jockey embedded with the U.S. Army in Afghanistan. Heartfelt gratitude is offered to Casa de La Luz Hospice, Oro Valley, for their guidance and support to Genie, Connie and Bill.

A memorial and celebration of Genie's beautiful life will be at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 1, at the Canyon del Oro Baptist Church located at 9200 North Oracle Road, in Oro Valley.

Services will be held at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 26, at the Osheim-Catron Funeral Home in Rapid City. Burial will follow the service at the family plot in Mt. Calvary section of the Mountain View Cemetery. A reception at the Radisson Hotel will follow the burial.

Alice Eugenia Chilcoat Updike truly embodied the spirit, kindness, and love that shines only from the best.

Friends may sign the online Guest Book and offer condolences at [www.osheimcatron.com](http://www.osheimcatron.com).