

(Iris Critchell title page)

Our second inductee is Iris Cummings Critchell, a WASP of World War II.

Iris is escorted by her friend, Captain Becky Howell.

An athlete in her youth, Iris was a member of the US Olympic Swimming Team in Berlin in 1936, and reigned as US women's 200-meter breaststroke champion from 1936 to 1939.

(WACO)

Iris was a member of the first Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP) at the University of Southern California (USC), graduating from the Advanced Acrobatics course in 1940.

(WASP alone)

She was member of the second class of women recruited by Jacqueline Cochran for Army flight training in Houston, earning her wings in May 1943 as a member of WASP Class 43-2. She was assigned to the 6th Ferrying Group at Long Beach, California, serving as a civilian ferry pilot with the Air Transport Command Ferrying Division until the WASP were deactivated on December 20, 1944. She flew 18 types of military aircraft as pilot in command, including the A-24, P-39, P-40, P-47, P-51, C-47, A-20, B-25, P-38, and P-61.

(BT-13)

Iris developed the first aviation curriculum for the USC College of Aeronautics in beginning in 1946. She taught Primary, Instrument, Commercial and Instructor courses and gave all the instrument flight instruction in war-surplus Vultee BT-13 trainers.

(Iris with Nancy Bird Walton)

Iris has been active in the Ninety-Nines since 1952. She competed in the All Woman Transcontinental Air Race (AWTAR) 15 times, placing in the top ten five times. She flew this race with Australia's Pioneer legend and Ninety Nine, Nancy Bird Walton.

(Iris with Alice R.)

She also served on the Race Board for nine years (and on the Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship Committee for six years.)

(group with names)

In the late 1950s, Iris' instruction of, and subsequent friendship with, Isabel Bates spawned a unique curriculum that used the airplane as an educational tool to broaden and enhance the education of young people beginning with junior high and high school.

(group without names)

Iris and her husband Howard established the Bates Foundation college-age program at Harvey Mudd College of Science and Engineering at the Claremont Colleges in 1962. Iris served as Director of the Bates Aeronautics Program, and for 28 years, as Lecturer in Aeronautics on the college faculty. After retirement to Emeritus status, she has continued some teaching and counseling.

(Critch and Iris)

Iris holds the following pilot ratings: Airline Transport, Commercial Single Engine Sea, Multi Engine Land, Instrument and Glider; Instructor, Airplanes, Single and Multi Engine, Instrument; Ground Instructor, Advanced and Instrument; FAA Designated Pilot Examiner for more than 20 years.

In 1972 The FAA Ontario District named her Flight Instructor of the Year and in 2002 Iris was inducted into the National Flight Instructor Hall of Fame. In October 2006, Iris was honored with the FAA Wright Brothers "Master Pilot" Award for "Fifty years of dedicated service, technical expertise, professionalism, and many other outstanding contributions that further the cause of Aviation Safety."

Iris says she is lucky to continue to fly well into the 21st Century....but I say that we are the lucky ones to have her, along with all the other WASP, as our role models, mentors, and friends.

Please join me in welcoming Iris Cummings Critchell into the WAI Pioneer Hall of Fame!