

Buracker & Boraker

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Gladys E. Buroker 1914-2002

Gladys Elliot Buroker was a nationally known aviator with a rich history as a pilot, parachute jumper, balloonist, and wing walker. She had achieved 20,000 flying hours with more than 60 years experience as a pilot, including a stint during World War II as a flight instructor to military recruits.

She died on Friday, November 8, 2002 at Beehive Homes in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Here are details of her life and achievements in the world of aviation.

Gladys was born March 16, 1914, in Bellingham, WA, to George and Viola (Murphy) Dawson. Her interest in aviation began at an early age. "I was 5 years old when I first saw an airplane in the sky," she recalled in an article published by the *Bellingham Herald* in 1992. "I was enthralled. Our family home was on Park Street in Bellingham then. That was in 1919. I ran to where the plane had landed in a pasture just south of Squalicum Creek. That is where my father found me."

Gladys graduated from Ferndale High at the age of 17 and learned to fly at the Tulip Field near Bellingham. She soloed in a Waco 10 biplane at the age of 18. Two years later, Gladys joined a barnstorming group for 20 exhibition parachute jumps throughout the Northwest. In 1936, she and a girlfriend toured the US and Mexico on her newly purchased Harley-Davidson motorcycle. On Aug. 4, 1937, she married her flight instructor, Herb Buroker.

Gladys went on to pursue a career in aviation. She was the first ground school instructor for the all-male academy at St. Martin's College in Lacey, WA. In 1942, due to the onset of WW II, Gladys and Herb moved their flight operations to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. They opened Weeks Field Aviation to provide War Training Service to students stationed at nearby Farragut Naval Base.

In collaboration with Clay Henley, Gladys and her husband developed Henley Aerodrome (now known as Silverwood), north of Coeur d'Alene. In 1972, Gladys bought a Semco hot air balloon and instructed in ballooning. While flying at the Aerodrome, she also received her license in gliders and became an FAA examiner for glider pilots.

At the age of 78, Gladys finally retired from flight instruction, but continued to fly until age 80. Her interest in flying continued and she enjoyed building ribs for Waco wings and constructing model airplanes.

In 1997 Gladys published an autobiography, entitled "Wind In My Face." Later she received the National Aeronautic Elder Statesman of Aviation Association award in Washington, D.C. in September of 2000.

She and her late husband, Herb, raised three children. She is survived by daughters Sally Simundson, Hayden Lake, and Linda Melhoff, Newberg, Oregon; son Kelly Buroker, Rathdrum; sister Vie Horch, Hansville, Washington; brother George Dawson, Seattle; six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren

(Based on articles in *Fancy Props*, December 2002/January 2003; Volume 19, Issue 6; *Kootenai County News*, posted November 18, 2002 and the *Bellingham Herald*)

See the Buroker/Boraker Pedgree on page 2. Notice that the father-in-law of Gladys Buroker was **Jacob Pence Buroker**. He settled his family near Coppei in eastern Washington. Situated on Coppei Hill was a village of four or five houses that became known as **Burokersville**.

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The Buraker/Boraker Pedigree

