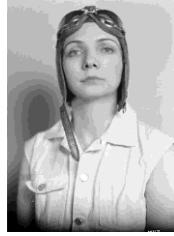


**MARY “MAE”
TALMAGE HAYS
HAIZLIP
1910-1997**



**REACHING
FOR
THE
SKIES**

When 18-year-old Mary Hays visited her father, a mining engineer, in Oklahoma, she decided to continue her flying lessons at the Graham School of Flying in Norman. Under her instructor Jim Haizlip, Mary became the second woman to hold a commercial pilot's license. In 1928, less than two weeks after meeting, the couple were married – and soon dominated civilian air racing.

In 1929, only 117 women held flying licenses but making a living at living at flying had few permanent career options. That year the National Exchange Club announced a Women's Air Derby. The 2,700-mile race was a chance to show the world that women could be independent, competitive, self-sufficient, intelligent, graceful, and really good pilots.

The race attracted twenty competitors included Amelia Earhart, Pancho Barnes, Bobbi Trout, Louise Thaden, Gladys O'Donnell, Blanche Noyes, Ruth Elder, Neva Paris, Opal Kunz, Mary von Mach, Vera Dawn Walker, Phoebe Omlie, Edith Foltz, Chubbie Keith-Miller, Thea Rasche, Marvel Crosson, Claire Fahy, Ruth Nicole, Margaret Perry, and 19-year-old Mary Haizlip.

The race started on Sunday, August 18th at Clover Field in Santa Monica. The 3,000 spectators included Will Rogers, Wiley Post, Howard Hughes and Edgar Rice Burroughs, author of the Tarzan series. As the 2pm start neared, Earhart, Thaden and Crosson were worried that Haizlip was missing. Forced to replace her aircraft, she arrived a day late.

Whispers of sabotage began on the Day Two when the flying wires of Fahy's plane broke during flight. When Crosson's demolished plane was found the next day, it was determined she died of carbon monoxide. Walter Beech immediately made modifications to all the planes – probably saving other lives. There was talk of halting the race, but when the press tried to make an issue of women not being able to fly, this made them more determined to finish the race in Crosson's memory.

The race continued through New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma. At Wichita, over 10,000 spectators swarmed Thaden, who was leading the race. As flowers were placed around her neck, she dedicated her results to Marvel Crosson. As the race traveled through Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio on the way to Cleveland, front page headlines eagerly followed the women's progress. Thaden finished 1st, Earhart 3rd, and Haizlip 7th.

Mary dominated the National Air Races from 1929 to 1932. In 1931, she competed in eight different races in six different airplanes. She was the second highest money winner, man or woman. She set a speed record of 255 MPH at the 1932 races – a speed record that stood for seven years!

During World War II, Mary became a test pilot for Spartan and Douglas Aircraft Companies in southern California. In 1982 she became the first woman ever inducted into the Oklahoma Aviation and Space Hall of Fame. Mary died in January 1997 at age 92 in Pacific Palisades.

Mary admitted, "Racing planes didn't necessarily required courage, but it did demand a certain amount of foolhardiness and a total disregard of one's skin." The gutsy attitude of this strong and daring woman placed her in the annals of the great pioneers of air racing.