

Faith Wohnus Hallock

Born: August 28, 1919

Interviewed by Patrica Lynch

Interviewed: May 5, 2003

Chemung, NY

We will be speaking with Faith Hallock, who is a resident of Elmira, New York. Faith was born August 28, 1919. She was a member of the Civilian Private Training Program, a unique pilot training program begun in Middlebury, Vermont when she was in college. And she is going to relate these experiences and share with us that began in 1939.

Q: Is that correct?

FH: Yes.

Q: Just prior to World War II.

FH: (nodding) Prior to World War II.

Q: So, we're going to begin there.

FH: The Civilian Private Training Program used to be called, CPTP, as an acronym short. And it was formed, because there was aggressive behavior in Europe, particularly in Germany in the middle thirties. And as it worsened, the general public probably wasn't too aware of what was going on, but congress was aware. Congress was pretty much isolationists, and we didn't have an air force. So, things began to come together. And as the situation in Europe worsened, congress decided that the quickest, cheapest and easiest way of getting an air force formed was to take it to the college level. And enlist college seniors all across the United States to enter this training program. Now there was another hitch, there were enough women interested in what was called, 'Feminism.' They wanted to participate. So, ten percent of the total population enrolled in the program were women. I was a senior at Middlebury College, but I had a fession professor, who had been held a hostage in Germany. He was a pilot and had been shot down, and talked to every freshman every year.

Q: During World War I?

FH: Yes, it was World War I when he was shot down, and he had a great influence on every freshman class, because it was contemporary civilization. And he was a very imposing person. I also had had a German professor at Middlebury who had a brother as a professor in Germany. And they switched every year, but when it came time to do the switching at that point, Germany was reluctant to let one leave Germany knowing full well they would never come back from the United States to Germany. So, he was being held hostage, because we had the other brother at Middlebury teaching. That brought Germany's aggressive behavior right close to home. And it began to bring that kind of situation to the front all across the United States. Also, they could train us cheaply, because we already had a place to stay and food to eat, because we were in college. So, for the Federal Government to move in on the situation, the Civilian Pilot Training Program was put together. I had been planning to go to law school, which I didn't really want to do. I was interested in the world situation. I thought flying might be something interesting. So, I enrolled in the program. And in order to enroll in the program, you also

had to pass the physical examination, and that's were some of the troubles began. The physician that did flight exams in Vermont had never had any women before. There wasn't even such a thing as a woman's flight examination. And when I went for that, I passed. And the doctor told me that I'd make a great brick layer, which wasn't very flattering. Another thing that was interesting was the fact that my ears were good. Punctured eardrums wiped out a lot of would be aviators in those days. Punctured eardrums were common in people my age in the thirties, because kids used to get something called whooping cough, which you don't hear much about anymore. And whooping cough could lead to punctured eardrums. So, I was hale, hearty and healthy. And my sorority sister, who also became one of the group, was a junior. I was the only senior woman that could fill all the prerequisites. And when there were two of us in the same sorority in this program, our sorority advisor got real upset. She figured two of us would never graduate, but the dean prevailed. It was like carrying a double, maybe even a triple, major in your senior year. It was time consuming, and that was because we had another problem, how to get to the airport. You had to have a car and Middlebury students weren't allowed to have cars in the thirties and forties. And we had to get a car and a driver with the same licenses, and money to pay for the gas. And we had to schedule almost every minute of our time to get us to the airport so that we didn't pass each other running and driving at the same time to get to the airport.

Q: You were not reimbursed for this training in any way? (Repeated)

FH: Oh no, oh no. You see we were... Our had parents already paid the college to feed us and to house us, so all they had to was teach us how to fly. That was paid for by the government. But getting to the airport was paid again from our pocketbooks. I never heard my family say anything about the fact I wouldn't fly. In fact, there were times I used to think they hoped I'd get killed (giggles). But we all finally got going. We had ground school that used to seem endless. The professors at the college didn't want the program to fail, because it would reflect on them. We had Celestial Navigation, which of course I never used ever in my entire life. We had Theory of Flight. We had every part of the airplane explained to us, particularly ignition. The professors were bound and determined that we would know what they thought we should know. And we had to learn, because we knew we would be tested. And our lives at that point were at stake. We weren't all that sure that we were going to be successful, and most of us didn't know anything about an airplane except yes they did go up and yes they did come back. But we started flying in October 1939. And the last person was qualified as a pilot on the first of May 1940, a lot of running around. It was a cold, cold winter. It was the coldest winter in Vermont in many years, like Champlain lake was frozen over, so that the same program going on at the University of Vermont at Burlington was using the lake as a runway. We didn't have to do that to keep out of anybody else's way. The airline, Colonial Airlines flew from New York to Montreal and every once in a while, they'd see one of us flapping around someplace, and they'd just go around us, because there was no inter-radio. We had nothing in the airplane to communicate with. We had very few instruments. We learned to fly literally by the seat of our pants. We went on skis in January, which was another whole ballgame. We had a runway from North to South, no East to West runway, so we always made cross wind landings. Learning to fly on skis was a lot of fun, especially the first time the airplane wouldn't go up, because you had picked up so much snow. Most of us had learned to ski at Middlebury, so we had to do it now with an

airplane to push and pull around. We had to leave early in the morning in order to get to the airport to warm up the grease and oil that were going to be used in the airplane.

Q: How did you do that?

FH: Well, the prop grease had to be warmed up with a contrivance that was made out of a leader pipe, like you have a rainspout and an acetylene torch, so you wouldn't set fire to the airplane, to warm up the grease in the prop, because there airplanes were small. They were eighty-five, seventy-five, sixty-five horsepower, prop driven. And the props wouldn't turnover unless they were warmed up. We had a mechanic, who was devoted to the program, and would have given his life for anyone of us. And we had to trust him. We had to trust our instructors. So, probably the first thing that I learned, not that I was to fly, but that I knew absolutely nothing, and I'm on my own. I had never *learned* anything in my life until that point. I had been taught, but I had never learned. And the first time I'm ready to take off by myself, that was the only thought I had, "*I don't know what I'm doing.*" But the man who had been out instructor, felt I was capable of going, so I went and soloed in December of 1939. They wanted all of us to solo before Christmas, but we didn't quite make that. We had to adjust our entire college program to meet with the vagaries of the flight program. But it was successful, and nobody got hurt, nobody got killed and we all graduated, which was not as much a feather in our caps as it was in the people that were instructing us. Because they didn't know anymore than we did, they just were older, and they had jobs that could be expanded to include teaching what we had to learn.

Q: So, you weren't given any special recognition for completing the course?

FH: No. In fact, we didn't even get our CPTP little wings, which I don't even wear, because I'm so afraid I'll lose them. We didn't get them for two years. I don't even know who paid for those. I think the Federal Government did. I went back to the airport after I had toddler children. And this was an impressive thing. The owner of the airport quickly took me to see the bathrooms. When I learned to fly, there was a shed to protect the airplanes and a little shack that protected the fuel, and the grease, and the oil. And there were no bathrooms on the ground. Girls were not allowed to wear pants in those days. So, we could not go to the bathroom from whenever we left the college until we got back to the college. So, we had to learn how to handle that problem very quickly. The man who owned the airport was justifiably proud of the fact that we had never made him a problem complaining about the fact there were no bathrooms, but he had some now 1945, 1946 something like that. The no pants edict made another problem when it was time to learn aerobatic flying. We had to strap on parachutes, and you can't strap a parachute around your thighs with a skirt on. So, there was some more concern about the fact that they've got women and no pants allowed on campus and what to do about it. These look like no brainer problems now, but there was a lot of concern in those days. Women thought differently than men, and men thought differently than women.

Q: Were you allowed to wear the pants at training?

FH: The dean, after much discussion, allowed us to wear pants when we were going to do aerobatics. And in fact, a man came from this Civil Air Board unexpectedly, a day when I was up practicing, but not dressed for aerobatics, and I remember having to shimmy into a grease jockey's jumpsuit and out of my skirt in front of probably six or eight guys. Everybody was hooting and howling. It wasn't salacious. It was just good

clean fun, but it was hysterically funny at that period of time. Today, it wouldn't... nobody would even notice it. I think about that whenever I see the women astronauts go out with all that *stuff* on. I wonder what the dean would say now.

Q: Did you put your training to use after college? You mentioned having children, so apparently marriage occurred.

FH: Well, we were on call of the United States Government. Some of the men went immediately into the Navy or the Army. Remember, we still didn't have an Air Force. We were the beginning of it. The women were not called up at all. I went to work for American Airlines and had to go to American Airlines training school, which was, again fabulous training. By the spring of 1941, I was so thoroughly indoctrinated with the aviation business, that really has stood me in good stead all my life. First of all, I learned that nothing's impossible. And if something has to be changed, so you change it. But one of the things you have to do to get a pilot's license is fly solo on a trip. Well, solo on a trip in 1940 was far different than a solo on a trip today; No instruments, rudiment maps, snow and find a couple of airports, again with snow on the ground and get yourself back. So, it certainly gives you a feeling of personal ability that I never had before, that I done it. You can't take that away from yourself no matter what else happens. It may or may not have lead to some other things I did later on. But I worked for American Airlines. I worked for TWA. I worked for Robison, which became Mulhawk Airlines following the war.

Q: During the period of World War II, did you use your pilot's training?

FH: Well, I left American Airlines after Pearl Harbor, which was struck December of 1941. I worked for awhile. In the meantime, I had been married, and I was pregnant with my first baby. That was not fitting in those days. So, I was asked to leave American Airlines.

Q: Where you were working, as not a pilot though.

FH: Not working as a pilot there. I was working as anything that needed doing got done. After my baby was born, I joined the Civil Air Patrol and did fly on the Jersey coast. It was an attempt to scare off German U-boats, which I always thought was kind of silly. But there was homeland protection in those days, not called that. But everybody had to have curtains on their windows at night. There was a blackout. In fact, when my first baby was born there was a blackout when I was in the hospital. And the nurses took all the babies in the nursery, and they handed them in the dark. And you passed them along until all the babies had somebody holding on to them, but it wasn't necessarily your own baby. It was serious business even if now it looks like it was a feeble attempt, but that was a long time ago. When I was finally called up by the United States Government, I had a baby. They decided I wasn't necessary.

Q: That made you ineligible.

FW: I was ineligible to fly. So, some of this, you see, is as much about women's place as it is about aviation, because this is the kind of thing that was going on everywhere. For many women just having any kind of a job outside the home became a heroic effort when World War II finally struck the United States.

Q: When you flew as a pilot or when you were employed by the airlines and during this war period, what are your recollections of how you were accepted as a female and what the conditions were that you worked on?

FW: Well, when we learned to fly at Middlebury, it was more or less like being in with your brothers, your cousins. We'd been in this same school together for four years. We were just a little more closely knit, because we were running back and forth in the same vehicle to the airport. We had specifically the exact same problems learning to fly. We were accepted just as we had been accepted at the school. The business about bathrooms with difference to our being female was never even mentioned. It was just our problem. We had to take care of it. Nobody else ever mentioned it including the dean, even though she got worried about pants and parachutes. She never worried about going to the bathroom. But when I went to go to work for the airlines, it was a little bit different. There were a lot of people who were resentful. There's a book, one of the best history's of aviation that I know about called, '*Fate is the Hunter*', by Ernest K. Gann, which our library threw its copy away of and does not have a copy. But in there it tells about some early airline pilots walking through the offices in the morning to get their flight plans and so on and for the first time seeing females working for an airline and that it was wonderment. Everything has a beginning and these are some of the beginning things. When I worked for Mulhawk Airlines, we used to give flight tours of Broome County on Sunday afternoons for people who'd never been off the ground. It was always amazing. Number one, how many people had never been off the ground and their questions. Again, bathrooms were something a lot of women worried about. "*How did you go to the bathroom in an airplane?*" They likened it to when old-fashioned trains simply flushed the johns on the railroad tracks. And every once in awhile you'd hear about a airplane having a small problem with its lavatory in the air. But it's a major problem now in NASA's program. So, there is a beginning, you see, for everything.

Q: So, to be a woman employed in any position was a unique thing and that was what the men reacted to. (Inaudible both women talk.)

FH: In the first place, we were working real hard in proving ourselves quickly. If you could not, as they say, cut the mustard, you got cut yourself very quickly. I know several women that just simply could not handle it, and probably in another fifteen or twenty years they could have handled it. But that was the way it was then. I personally never had a real problem until I went to work for New York State in the 1970's. It was a major problem (giggles) with my sex.

Q: What do you think brought about the airlines' need to employ women? Were they directed to at all by government or short of male help? Why did they originally begin when it was not an ordinary profession?

FH: I think the war itself changed a lot of minds. Back in 1937 and 1938 when the Civilian Pilot Training Program was being put together, it's hard to tell who tipped the scale for the percentage of women. There were very few women in congress. Feminism was not popular. The Equal Rights Amendment had not been passed, and there was still plenty of fighting over that. So, I have never known any handful of women that could be pin pointed as the ones who opened the door for women in aviation. But once the war hit and men were drafted, women had to suddenly do anything and everything that they possibly could to just keep a workforce going. Rosie the Riveter, everybody can

remember. And they still, on a national level, sell Rosie the Riveter sweatshirts, mugs and things like that to remind women, young women that it wasn't always so easy.

Q: Rosie the Riveter sweatshirts originated with... because of the women working in industry, replacing the males who had gone into the service.

FW: But it's amazing that they are still saleable at a national level. You would think that people should have accepted women as people, as workers without any handicap. There are still handicaps. There's the glass ceiling and the sticky floor.

Q: How did you feel about the war as a civilian?

FH: The two men that were involved with me as professor, of course, were that. They were professors. I was closer to the one as a freshman, because I was picked to be in his discussion group as a leader. We talked about it informally far more than the average... even college freshman. It was more like having a relative who had been a prisoner of war in World War I. Then we were face-to-face with the brother of the hostage in 1937. It was a conversation. *"Who was going to be our German prof? Are they going to let him come home?"* And his family... Because the men took their wives, but the kids stayed home to go to school. Because this was going to be a switch all the time. It was a very personal thing. Now it wasn't blood family, but it was very much closer relationship than probably only a dozen kids even had in those days during the war.

Q: So, then your own country enter the war.

FW: And then after the United States enter the war, pilots that I knew very casually left one at a time to go to fly in what was becoming then an air force. A number of pilots that I knew as American Airline pilots never came back. Once I had children, of course, then it was the business of how do you live with kids and get food with ration stamps. I learned how to cut my kids' hair, because there weren't any barbers. They'd all gone to war. But there was no television bringing us the horrors like television is bringing us now.

Q: There wasn't as much communication. You had to depend on what the radio and newspapers?

FW: You had to depend on the radio. And depending on where you lived, depend on the newspaper. I think everybody would notice the difference right here in Elmira now. If you read the Elmira paper and pick up the New York Times, you would think you're in the same world. That's a matter of economics where ever you live and the density of people what you have access to. But television certainly brings you the horrible side of it. And of course, they're all saying keep little kids from watching it if you possibly can and much discussion of how they show the war among the people who are showing it.

Q: But your children were quite young and actually knowledgeable or too young to realize the circumstances of the war.

FH: Well, since kids have for the last twenty years at least on TV seen all kinds of gangster type movies, and since I had grandchildren that were at that stage, you wonder how much they understand, how much they feel.

Q: But your own children did not.

FH: My own children did not, no.

Q: No comprehension of the war, because of their age and not exposure to things like television we have today.

FH: I'm just glad that my own children were sort of between wars and didn't have to face the horror of them.

Q: Did you live on your... was your husband in the service?

FH: No, no and I was divorced shortly after the war. I think that my independence probably was as much at fault as anything else, because I was certainly as independent as all... I was going to say hell, but I'll say all heck.

Q: And not content to be just a housewife and mother.

FH: Well, certainly when I learned to fly, I learned a great deal of resourcefulness, in the sense, I can do it. And sometimes I've had to remind myself years later when it had nothing to do with flying. *"Look Faith, you remember how to fly."*

Q: So, you're saying that it really had a deep effect on your future life. (Yes.) That you recall all that training and the effects...

FH: Yes, in fact when I came to Elmira... First of all, it was to break an age barrier that New York State had, if you can imagine, in 1973. I broke that, so then the next barrier to break was the sex barrier. It was not very pleasant to come work in Elmira at the prison and say *"You can't go in lady."* It was sort of a throwback to, you can't fly lady. I won that battle too.

Q: Well, tell us about becoming, if you will, one of the first lady parole officers in New York State.

FH: Well, when I came to Elmira having already fought with the... Well, first of all passed the Civil Service test. Then again it came a matter of a doctor's physical, and I said to the powers to be and all that be the doctor's going to know that I'm long since past forty-one, which was the age limit. And I said there's no sense getting the doctor involved in it.

Q: Do you recall what the civil service age limit was?

FW: The age limit was forty-one, and I was fifty-five. They made some comparisons. I went back through things. I think I threatened court action. I had an attorney. I think now that I'm way, way past even fifty-five, I think the state figured I couldn't make it, so let me fall on my face and that'll be the end of that. But I didn't fall on my face.

Q: How long did you work as a lady parole officer?

FH: I worked there nine years as an institutional parole officer in a male prison.

Q: That was in our local correctional institution?

FH: I was in Elmira Correctional facility. The inmates themselves knew my predicament. I was fighting the state of New York just as they were fighting the state of New York.

Q: Can you explain that a little more to us?

FH: I think at first they were kind of amazed. And then it got to be whenever it was a personal thing, it got to be a discussion. It's unfortunate, I think, for the state of New

York and for the correctional system that women have been so restricted. But again, I managed to solo flight when I was a kid and I managed nine years in Elmira Correctional.

Q: Strength of character, huh Faith? We are fortunate in this community that we have an outstanding young female pilot with whom you're well acquainted, by the name of Eileen Collins. Would you share something with us about your friendship with her?

FH: This is another amazing thing. I knew Eileen Collins' grandfather back in the '40's when he was an employee of the area railroad, and I was in the travel business. Then when I worked at the Elmira Correctional facility, Rose Collins, Eileen Collins' mother, worked in the office there. So, I sort of grew into Eileen. It's very unfortunate that when she made her first space flight and we had a wonderful celebration planned in Elmira, that some pathetic soul made a threat on her life. But that's part of being a celebrity.

Q: We should identify her as a pilot in the space program and who has also commanded her first space shuttle flight and scheduled to do another.

FH: Yes. Eileen learned to fly originally not by the seat of her pants, because by the time she was a kid, they had instruments in every airplane now, and then she went on to school. She was a member of R.O.T.C at Syracuse University. She's a brilliant mathematician. She taught math, but she went on to the flight school in the west and got a Master's Degree. She became an officer in the Air Force before she became an astronaut. So, she really has two bosses, the Air Force and NASA, which is a tick in itself keeping both of those departments happy. As I've said, she's made her first flight a long time ago. Then she became the first woman pilot of a shuttle. Then later on she became the first woman commander of a shuttle. And incidentally, and it's not so incidentally, she has a New York State historic marker at Elmira Free Academy as part of a 1978 Women's Recognition Program in New York State. We were able to get a marker for her in 1990. Because it was 1995 she was the first pilot.

Q: And a few months ago you were schedule to see her... to go... to see her second...take off. But they told us it was canceled.

FH: Yes, I was tickled that she invited me to see her take off. But would've... who knows if that was her last flight or not. Everybody was holding her breath about making reservations, even to go to Florida including her mother, because it depended on the previous flight coming back on time. And you know sometimes they're held up to three days, because of landing conditions. (And unfortunately...) And unfortunately Challenger blew up and didn't make it back, which put everybody on hold. And that's all anybody is on right now, is hold...

Q: Is she schedule to go when they authorize it?

FH: She's still scheduled to go, but not when.

Q: You're still hoping to see her.

FH: I hope she goes, and I hope that Elmira does more to honor her firstisms, because I think they're very important. It's not a lot of people here who will become space pilot shuttles, but there are a lot of women here, there are a lot of young women, there are a lot of little girls here who don't have role models. We don't have much industry here. There are more things to do here than to teach school and take care of old patients.

Q: Well, I know, during your lifetime here locally that you've always been a strong advocate of women's rights and for other important causes too.

FH: Well, we did try hard here. We had the seventy-fifth anniversary of Women's Right to vote. But it was hard work to... Judge O'shay and I were honorary co-chairs. We had to work real hard. Now that's not physical labor, that's emotional/mental labor to get people to go on with us. (Judge O'shay being a female.) Here we are within an hour's drive, hour and half's drive to the National Women's Hall of Fame. And there are thousands of kids here right now in school who've never been here.

Q: Is there anything else that you'd like to share with us?

FH: I think that has been at least a two-prong thing. One is women's history and the other is aviation history, and certainly the women who have preceded me by hundreds of years, never thought about ninety percent of the things I've been chattering about. But they did something that moved women along in this world. And you have to tip your hat to all of the women who had to put up with petticoats when we were having trouble just getting into a pair of pants to put on a parachute.