

Flying Sheilas

Directed and Produced by Tristan Loraine

Fact Not Fiction Films Ltd © 2008

Duration: 62 minute feature documentary (Film Festival / Cinema version - 74 minutes)

Shooting format: XDCAM HD

Format: HDCAM

Production period: November 2006 – March 2008

Budget: US\$ 100,000

Website: www.flyingsheilas.com



One line synopsis: The amazing story of 8 unique Australian female pilots who helped shape, Australian aviation history.

Brief synopsis: 'Flying Sheilas' tells the unique stories of seven Australian female commercial pilots and one air force pilot; depicting their extraordinary flying careers and the visual spectacle of where they were fortunate enough to live and work in Australia and beyond.

Longer synopsis: 'Flying Sheilas' is an amazing insight into the stories of 8 Australian female military and commercial pilots, depicting their extraordinary flying careers and the visual spectacle of where they were fortunate enough to live and work in Australia and beyond. Their stories are intertwined through the career of Melbourne born pilot, Susan Michaelis, who introduces each of them and how they played a part in her career.

The first of the Flying Sheilas, **Nancy Bird Walton AO, OBE**, is shown learning to fly at Mascot in 1933 with Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. She became the youngest female professional pilot in the British Commonwealth while navigating west of Bourke via the Shell road map and via 'where the fence posts met'!

Deborah Lawrie will always be known for her historic legal challenge with Sir Reginald Ansett, through the Equal Opportunities Commission in the late 1970s. - A legal battle to become the first commercial pilot with the major airlines.

In the mid 1980s the RAAF selected **Robyn Williams** to become one of the first two female pilots to join the Australian Air Force. After being a transport pilot she was selected to

undertake 'Test Pilots Course'. She later went on to become a Wing Commander accepting the new C130-J Hercules into the Australian Air Force.

Around the same time **Melissa Blain** was a charter pilot flying out of Moorabbin in Melbourne. Forced to fly crayfish as she was advised that clients would not fly with a female pilot, Melissa went onto traverse the country daily whilst flying as a captain for Virgin Blue.

Flying up and down the NSW Coast was where **Sally Muggeridge** started her commercial flying in Australia where she met Susan on the first ever female crewed flight for the Qantas group in 1992. Sally then went to Europe to fly until she decided to swap flying regional jets operating at 450 knots to become an airship 'Blimp' pilot in the USA doing 45 knots with a strong tailwind.

Christine Davy, MBE, studied for her commercial pilot licence in 1956 whilst representing Australia at the winter Olympics as a downhill skier. Flying a range of aircraft for Connellan Airways in 1963 out of Alice Springs, Christine became Australia's first multi crew female captain flying DC3s throughout the Outback. The DC3 she states always had 'personality' as no one ever quite knew what it would do next. Christine swapped fixed wing flying in the outback for helicopters based up in the Kimberleys, servicing the offshore oil industry where she met Susan. Susan spent her early flying years up in the Northern Territory Top End and in the Kimberleys, Western Australia.

The Flying Sheilas stories are told through the eyes of **Susan Michaelis**, who learnt to fly at Moorabbin in Victoria in the mid 1980s. Susan, the winner of the CAA Sir Donald Anderson trophy spent her early aviation career flying throughout the Northern Territory Top End and in the Kimberleys, Western Australia then going on to fly in the Qantas Regional network for many years. It is her remarkable story of how the various Flying Sheilas crossed her path and played a part in her life that is central to this unique documentary.

The last of the pilots, **Robyn May**, flew extensively throughout South Australia after spending the early 1970s flying throughout the highlands and coastal regions of Papua New Guinea.

A totally unique vision of Australia as seen through the eyes of eight amazing 'Flying Sheilas'.





Documentary theme song:

The theme song for 'Flying Sheilas' has been written, produced and sung by 18 year old, Yorkshire born Kate Garbutt. Fact Not Fiction Films Ltd the production company behind 'Welcome Aboard Toxic Airlines' discovered Kate who had been performing since the age of 4, busking in Brighton. They contracted her to produce the theme songs for the current and forthcoming 'Fact Not Fiction Films' documentaries including 'Flying Sheilas'. (available on www.flyingsheilas.com)

Production team:

Director / Producer: Tristan Loraine
Screenplay and original story: Susan Michaelis and Tristan Loraine
Interviewer: Sally Penwill
Principal Cinematographer / DOP: Benjamin Foot
Sound Recordist: Tristan Loraine and Susan Michaelis
Graphics: Pre-Vis.org
Music Score: Kate Garbutt
Editor: Tristan Loraine
On-Line Editor: Mike Butler

Contact details:

Production Company.

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