



Bernice Steadman (B Steadman)

(1925 - 2015)

Inducted: 2003

Locale: Traverse City and Rudyard

Era: Contemporary

Area(s) of Achievement: Aviation

In 1961, Bernice "B" Trimble Steadman had the distinct honor of being one of the first 13 women, the Mercury 13, to qualify as American astronauts. She was not, however, allowed to gain even more distinction as an astronaut because the Women in Space program was canceled before any of the Mercury 13 were airborne.

B Steadman always knew she wanted to fly. After graduating from high school during WWII, Steadman took a job as an inspector at Flint's A.C. Sparkplug to pay for flight lessons. The lesson paid off, and in 1945 she qualified for her private pilot's license even before receiving her driver's license. Steadman then became a flight instructor, and later operated a flight school, a charter service, and Fixed Base Operation at Flint Bishop Airport. After WWII, B instructed 10th Air Force Officers.

Steadman was an avid air racer and has competed in numerous competitions. She won the All Women's Transcontinental Air Race and the All Women's International Air Race to Cuba in 1955.

B Steadman's greatest achievement, however, may be her participation in the Mercury 13 Women in Space program. She was one of the 13 women who endured and successfully passed the psychological and physical tests given to male astronauts. Even though these 13 remarkable women were not allowed to complete their space mission, they proved to the country that women were equally as qualified as their male counterparts. They also changed the course of women in aviation. Lt. Colonel Eileen Collins, U.S. Air Force, the first woman to command a space shuttle said, "I didn't get here alone. If the Mercury Thirteen had failed, it would have been a different story for me." Steadman, with the assistance of Jody Clark, has captured her story of that important time in history in *Tethered Mercury: A Pilot's Memoir: The Right Stuff, The Wrong Sex*.

Bernice Steadman currently possesses an Airline Transport License, the FAA's highest rating. Her career flying hours total over 16,000. Mrs. Steadman is the co-founder, past President and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the International Women's Air and Space Museum in Cleveland, Ohio. She has served as a charter member of the Federal Aviation Agency's Women's Advisory Committee on Aviation and as the Chair of the Airport Commission in Ann Arbor.

In 2002 Bernice Steadman was inducted into the Michigan Aviation Hall of Fame. She is now recognized by the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame for her remarkable spirit, her determination, and, most importantly, for the advances she has made for women.