

A Special Edition To Honor Allan & Betty Erde Our Club's First Life Members

WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE BETTY SKELTON ERDE BY THE MEMBERS OF THE INDIAN RIVER CORVETTE CLUB.

We aren't racing this time. We are reflecting. We have this pause to give us time to thank God. And, it is easy to do. So, repeat after me: "Thank you God, for Betty."

Indian River Corvette Club has had the unique privilege of having a national treasure as our fellow club member, and now we have Betty and Allan as life members.

Their relocation to the Villages is not a good bye; it is, to quote Beth, a see -you-later-moment. To list her many accomplishments would be redundant and would fall short. It is best to list some of the adjectives we all have used to describe Betty. This may not be a complete list, so if you have more, please let me know. Here goes:

KIND, BRAVE, LOYAL, SPECIAL, PRETTY, SINCERE, GENEROUS, INTELLIGENT, SWEET, CLASSY, SMART, BELOVED, FRIENDLY, FAITHFUL, HONORABLE, SKILLED, TALENTED, GIFTED, STYLISH, SUCCESSFUL, DEDICATED, LEGEND, SUPERSTAR, GREAT, AND RESPECTED.

Of course we all have a special bond with Betty, but I want to be selfish and share my word: **FRIEND.**

Thank you Betty for all your support and wise counsel.

Love you!

ZORo

P.S. We will see Betty and Allan in the Villages in November. Details to be announced soon.



Betty, Betty, & Ro

The Friendliest Corvette Club in Florida

Betty & Allan At Our Club Activities

The First Lady of Firsts

Betty made her very first solo flight at the tender age of 12. She soloed legally on her 16th birthday and quickly earned her private license. She received her commercial rating at 18, and, in short order, her flight instructor and multi-engine ratings. She won her first International Feminine Aerobatic Champion on January 1, 1948 flying her Great Lakes. Betty won her second and third consecutive International Feminine Aerobatic Championships in 1949 and 1950.

Betty moved to North Carolina and met Bill France, Sr. of NASCAR who talked her into driving at Daytona Beach during Speed Week. Not only did she drive the pace car at Daytona, she also set a stock car record. Betty had a new career. As auto industry's first female test driver. Betty earned a total of four Feminine World Land Speed Records and set a transcontinental speed record. She has been inducted into the International Aerobatic Hall of Fame, the International Council of Air Shows Hall of Fame, and the Corvette Hall of Fame. Each year the United States National Aerobatic Championships honor the highest placing female pilot with the "Betty Skelton First Lady of Aerobatics" award.

For more than half a century, Betty Skelton has been known as "the First Lady of Firsts." In the process of setting 17 aviation and racecar records, she also paved the way for women to enjoy equal opportunities in aviation, sports, and business. Nearly 35 years after retiring, Betty still holds more combined aircraft and automotive records than anyone in history.

- Established more combined aviation and automotive records than any other in history.
- Won the Feminine International Aerobatic Championship three times: 1948, 1949 and 1950.
- She became the first woman to perform an inverted ribbon cut only ten feet above the ground.
- In 1949 she set the world light plane altitude record in a Piper Cub - 25,763 ft.
- In 1951 she set the world light plane altitude record in a Piper Cub 29,050 ft.
- World speed record for piston engine aircraft P-51 racing plane over 3 km course at 421.6 mph.
- Underwent NASA's physical and psychological tests given to the original seven astronauts; Betty's tests were featured on a LOOK magazine cover story in 1960.



Betty and Her Corvettes

Corvette Hall of Fame



Betty with NASCAR founder Bill France, Sr. at Daytona Beach in 1956.



**Betty Skelton Erde
(2001 Induction)**



Betty Working for Chevrolet

Betty Skelton (Erde), frequently referred to as the "first lady of firsts", worked side-by-side with some of the biggest names in Corvette, and established unbelievable records of her own in racing, aviation and automotive history. The first woman to be inducted in to the Corvette Hall of Fame was also the first woman in the world to drive racing cars to new records through the famous NASCAR measured mile on the sands of Daytona Beach. Skelton established records for Chevrolet behind the wheel of the Corvette, and appeared at major auto shows, as well as national ads and TV commercials.

Working as the first woman technical narrator for GM at major shows, Skelton attended and participated in many major races where Corvettes were showcased. She was on the committee that originated the "Corvette News" currently "Corvette Quarterly", and worked as the agency's editor for many years. Harley Earl at the GM Tech Center along with Bill Mitchell, designed a special Corvette for Betty in 1956-57. Skelton drove the translucent gold Corvette to Daytona for Speed Week and then paced all the NASCAR races with it in 1957. In 1959, she was invited by NASA to become the first woman to undergo physical and psychological testing for the first seven astronauts, and was directly involved with arranging America's first astronauts to become Corvette Owners. Her list of accomplishments span from honors at many Hall of Fames and Museums throughout the United States, to the recipient of record breaking honors in world land speed, stock car endurance, and the stock car flying mile record. Betty Skelton was considered the Official Spokeswoman for Chevrolet.



Betty and Her Love of Flying



Betty Skelton "First Lady of Aerobatics" Trophy

Presented to the top placing woman in the powered Unlimited category at the U. S. National Aerobatic Championships



Well-known in the late 1940s and throughout the '50s, Betty Skelton Frankman made history in aviation circles and was recognized for more than her share of "firsts." There is much to know about this unique and celebrated pilot who wrote to Patty Wagstaff in 1991 and said, "Receiving my first Medicare card a few months ago was not much of a thrill ...I wanted to burn it immediately and go out and buy a Pitts!"

Born to teenaged parents in Pensacola, Florida in 1926, Betty was almost more of a sister than a daughter to her vivacious mother and dad, the late David and Myrtle Skelton. Perhaps the aviation activity in Pensacola influenced them all, but Betty recalls always having wished that she could fly. She and her parents started flight lessons together at a time when Betty was too young to legally fly alone. Nonetheless, she soloed prior to becoming a teenager, and repeated the feat at the legal age of 16.

Betty has another first to her credit. Air show fans still thrill to the sight of a smoking, roaring airplane diving low, aiming toward a thin ribbon strung between poles on either side of the runway, rolling inverted a hair's breadth above the ground and clipping the ribbon with the vertical stabilizer. Betty wrote in 1989, "After my first attempt [at cutting a ribbon], I used it in air shows. A bit of humor was added. On the first pass, I would head directly for the person holding one of the poles. Usually, he was someone selected from the crowd and, as I approached, he would drop the pole and run. Then I would have an air show performer hold it for the second pass; I'd roll inverted and cut the ribbon. Spectators always seemed to enjoy the horseplay."

In 1975, the Chairman of the Board of NASCAR, member of the Florida Sports Hall of Fame, and owner of the Daytona International Speedway William "Bill" France wrote, in a tribute to Betty, "Few Americans have been fortunate enough... to attain success in four different professional fields of endeavor. It is even more amazing for a woman to have done so, particularly when three of the four careers were male-oriented

professions ...Betty Skelton is one of the most dynamic women I have ever known. I have watched Betty fly airplanes as only a champion could. I have seen her drive racing machines to new records time after time with the coolness of the best of automotive racing champions. She made automotive history when she drove a jet car on the Bonneville Salt Flats of Utah to become the first woman in the world to officially drive a vehicle over three hundred miles an hour. I have observed Betty's outstanding expertise and accomplishments as a business woman, ...a national advertising account executive ...Whether opening the throttle of an experimental airplane, manhandling the wheel of a jet car or making important decisions behind a desk, Betty Skelton will forever remain a lady, a SUPER-lady in my book."

► She was the first woman to: receive the race driver's AAA license, to drive a jet-powered car over 300 miles per hour, to drive an Indianapolis race car, to establish NASCAR records on the sands of Daytona Beach (in 1956 she drove a Corvette to a new Feminine World Land Speed Record averaging 145 mph), and to drive "jump boats" at Cypress Gardens in Florida. Betty Skelton was the first to become enshrined in:

- Tampa Sports Hall of Fame
- Florida Women's Hall of Fame
- Tampa Bay Walk of Fame
- International Aerobatic Hall of Fame
- International NASCAR Motor Sports Hall of Fame.
- Women In Aviation Pioneer Hall of Fame
- National Aviation Hall of Fame
- Corvette Hall of Fame

She and Don Frankmann were awarded the Silver Award for co-writing and producing CHALLENGE, an International Film Festival Winner, Best Industrial Film of 1965

Top Career Woman of Detroit in 1964



(Enshrinement 2005)

