

# Marvel Crosson

*Warsaw, Kosciusko County*

April 27, 1900 – August 19, 1929

Marvel Crosson, a Warsaw, Indiana, native, started flying in the early 1920s after moving to San Diego, California, with her family. Crosson and her brother, Joe, purchased an old, broken down Curtiss N-9 seaplane, and after rebuilding the plane, both Crosson and her brother learned how to fly. In 1927, Crosson followed her brother to Alaska, where she became the first female licensed pilot in the territory.<sup>1</sup> In 1928, Crosson and her brother completed their first trans-continental flight from Los Angeles to New York City.<sup>2</sup> Crosson moved back to California where on May 28, 1929, she set a new women's altitude record at 23,996 feet beating Louise Thaden's previous record of 20,270 feet.<sup>3</sup>

Later that year, Crosson entered the Women's Air Derby, where she raced beside other notable female pilots, including Amelia Earhart, Florence "Pancho" Barnes, and Louise Thaden.<sup>4</sup> Crosson was killed on August 19, 1929, when her plane crashed in the Arizona desert on the second day of the race. While there were suspicions of foul play, as many of the other female pilots reported issues with their own planes, the crash was pronounced an accident.

At a time where there were very few female pilots, Marvel Crosson worked hard to become an established and successful pilot, often facing opposition from fellow pilots because of her gender. The first time Crosson flew, her brother climbed out onto the wing of the plane, so that the other male pilots down below would believe that Crosson was flying.<sup>5</sup> In spite of the obstacles she faced, Crosson was one of the most successful female pilots during her time. In 2009, Crosson was inducted into the Alaska Women's Hall of Fame.<sup>6</sup>

The Marvel Crosson profile was provided to ICW by Shelby Perry, Grace College.

For more information about Marvel Crosson, go to:  
<http://www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/crosson.html>

*References will be published at the end of Women's History Month.*



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