



CT-4 Military Trainer, flown by Kathy and Edith

Kathy Haigh from cabin crew to pilot

There were no women pilots with Air New Zealand when Kathy Haigh joined the national airline in the 1980s as International Cabin Crew, but that didn't stop her desire to be a pilot. "I had a real love of flying and soon after joining Air New Zealand, started flying training at Ardmore to gain my Private Pilots Licence. I carried out the bulk of my ground courses by correspondence, but I had the opportunity to ask questions of Air New Zealand 747 pilots in the cockpit during night flights around the world – they were happy to help and were a wonderful source of information – navigation, meteorology, aircraft technology, aerodynamics. They would have me sit on the flight deck for landings. I would have loved to have become a pilot for Air New Zealand, but at the time, the airline was only replacing retiring pilots – with airforce guys who had 2000 hours jet time. I just couldn't compete." "In 1986 I obtained a Commercial Pilots Licence and shortly after, a C category Instructors Licence and Instrument Rating. I did some of the ground courses at Ardmore and was the only female on the course. On my days off in Los Angeles I would fly out of Torrance Airfield where they had all the navigation aids that we have at Mangere. "That was the time when I purchased my first aeroplane, with a partner. I was having lunch with a fellow aviator and bought her Cessna 182. We brought it back to New Zealand from the US in a container and Max Dixon at Waitemata Aero Club organized re-installation of the wings and propeller and test flew the aircraft. I used the Cessna for type ratings for aero club members. In 1991 I was one of four instructors who set up our own flying school, 'Wings' at Ardmore, where we all instructed part time."

Kathy now co-owns a CT-4 Military Trainer (as flown by the RNZAF Red Checkers Aerobatic team) with fellow aviatrix Edith Robinson, and has shares in Z-CAT, the Catalina Flying Boat. "I am currently carrying out First Officer training and with the ground course completed will be qualified to fly the Catalina. Flying her is fun and a challenge – it's all 'belts and braces' – Second World War technology. Perhaps in the future we can form an all female crew – it would be a world first." ■



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