

First Lady of Aerobatics

No mere Pitt-ance

First woman to perform the inverted ribbon cut. First woman inducted into the International Aerobatic Club (IAC) Hall of Fame. World light-plane altitude record-setter. This list is a smidgen of aerobatic pioneer Betty Skelton Frankman's career accomplishments.

Known as the First Lady of Firsts, Frankman is also the first woman to successfully compete in a Pitts Special (S-1C), which brought her and designer Curtis Pitts additional accolades. The small framed photograph shows Frankman inside the S-1C before she had it repainted in 1949. While *Little Stinker* now hangs inverted inside the Smithsonian's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, this quarter-scale model hangs topside in EAA's Attic. It's one of two built by modeler Charles J. Viosca in 1973. He donated the second one to the Smithsonian.

Center stage is the Betty Skelton "First Lady of Aerobatics" Trophy. Frankman conceived and donated the trophy to the IAC in 1988 to recognize the top-placing woman in the powered Unlimited category at the U.S. National Aerobatic Championships. This prestigious trophy bears the names of past recipients such as Patty Wagstaff and Debbie Rihn-Harvey. It is permanently on display at the EAA AirVenture Museum, as is the Pitts S-2 prototype *Big Stinker*.

—Kathleen L. Witman

