

Colleen Borgess, Class of 1974



Colleen was a little girl when, in 1968, she caught her first glimpse of a Pan Am international flight attendant. Then there she made up her mind about her future: she too would join elegant and glamorous Pan Am and fly around the world. After graduating from SUNY New Paltz with a major in Education and a minor in French, her dream became a reality. Pan Am hired her in the summer of 1979.

Colleen spent two years as a flight attendant before deciding she wanted to become a pilot. While continuing to work

as a flight attendant to pay for her training, she made her first solo flight in September 1981. Six years later, after thousands of hours as an instructor and a senior pilot, Colleen was hired as the first female pilot in Pan Am's 60-year history.

Colleen's first job as a pilot was flight engineer; a role that gave her responsibility for all the system operations on the plane. She excelled, and was quickly upgraded to first officer. She flew for Pan Am for several years before going out on maternity leave. When her two sons were small, however, she made the difficult decision to give up her chosen career as a pilot to focus on a more important job: being a Mom.

After many years devoted to her family, and only after her sons were grown, Colleen returned to flying as a corporate charter pilot, piloting a Beechcraft King Air 350.

Today there are many thousands of female pilots in the US, and Colleen hopes to have paved the way for them. She is a great example of a pioneer who reminds us that the sky's the limit!