

# First Time Racers Feel A Part Of History



*Alexis Meaders is greeted by 99-year-old Jeanette Geantil in Lee's Summit, Missouri (KLXT), during the Air Race Classic. Jeanette earned her pilot certificate in 1939 at Lambert Field (STL), Missouri. It has the distinction of being the first airport with an air traffic control system — although one that communicated with pilots via waving flags.*

*By Alexis Meaders, Memphis Chapter*

*This was the first race for Alexis Meaders and her co-pilot Sheila Smith, Spirit of Memphis, Classic Racer 1. Alexis provides an account of their experience.*

The preparation for the race was quite daunting. It seemed like there was so much to do and so much information. However, when we arrived in Jackson, it was somewhat anticlimactic, as having worked through all the pre-prep, we sailed through the credentials process.

Our goals were to finish the race and not have any penalties. Our preparation paid off, as we accomplished both. Execution is only as good as the preparation, so I know we would not have done so well without preparing as much as we did.

My race partner, Sheila, was very detailed and ensured that we were able to get through all the credentials. I backed her up and reviewed everything, and I also focused on making

## Top 10 ARC 2019 Winners

- 1st: Team 11: Corbi Bulluck & Stephanie Wrenn
- 2nd: Team 61: Caitlyn Miller & Kendall Higdon
- 3rd: Team 24: Jan Aarsheim & Elin-Mari Heggland
- 4th: Team 6: Ailsa Moseley Cutting & Sarah Wendt
- 5th: Team 44: Madison Bright, Rachel Chaput & Morgan Carney
- 6th: Team 22: Susan Carastro & Marie Carastro
- 7th: Team 99: Lara Gaerte & Donna Harris
- 8th: Team 29: Mickael Ashworth & Megan Shaffer
- 9th: Team 2: Susan Larson & Amy Ecclesine
- 10th: Team 19: JoAnne Alcorn & Gretchen Jahn

sure we were ready to fly the race. We did a dry run two weeks before, virtually flying the race in real-time based on the actual weather at the time. This was a good prep technique, as it helped us review the airspace and challenges leg by leg. It also made us think about the weather we were likely to face this time of year.

I think that as a first-time racer, a lot of the challenge is the unknown. The first leg was very daunting as the weather was not optimal. We knew that it was the most congested portion of the race, and everything we knew about how to do a flyby was what we had read and from briefings.

Once we had the first leg under our belt, it seemed easier. Our route was very interesting, and as we made it to our later stops, the flybys were more challenging, as well as the challenge of completing the border crossing VFR. It was nice to have knocked out the general experiences of racing before we hit some of those harder challenges.

Overall, the feeling I had after the race was of pride. I truly felt we had become a part of history. I felt proud to be a female aviator along with my fellow racers. I was very impressed by the caliber of the aviators in the race, including and especially the collegiate racers.

I know this is a memory and experience I will cherish for a lifetime, and I met so many wonderful women whom I hope to get to know better in the future. Aviation has always brought me joy, but what I truly love about it is always the people. The people are what made this experience amazing — all of them. The racers, the volunteers that put the race on every year, the volunteers at each stop and the people we met everywhere who welcomed us (like the manager at Perkins that gave us muffins in Fairmont, Minnesota).

I know that as time passes these memories will fade somewhat, but when I'm 99, I hope to be waiting at a stop to greet the 2067 Air Race Classic Racers. Unless I'm competing, of course.