



Carolyn Balsdon Hiller

DEC 3, 1924 - MAR 29, 2025



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Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
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With profound sadness, we announce the passing of Mrs. Carolyn Balsdon Hiller, who departed this life on March 29, 2025, at the age of 100, surrounded by the love of her family.

Born on December 3, 1924, on a family ranch near Grimes, California, Carolyn was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend. She lived a life of quiet strength, deep wisdom, and boundless grace, leaving a lasting imprint on all who had the privilege of knowing her.

Carolyn cultivated a lifelong passion for gardening, which led her to become an active leader in the Woodside-Atherton Garden Club and a dedicated member of the Palo Alto Junior League. A woman of intellect and poise, she attended the Anna Head School for Girls in Berkeley, where she formed friendships that endured for a lifetime. She later pursued her studies at the University of California, Berkeley, where fate intertwined her path with that of Stanley Van Winkle Hiller, Jr., a visionary helicopter pioneer and the love of her life. Introduced by a shared piano teacher, their connection blossomed into a beautiful partnership, and on May 25, 1946, they were married in the warmth of her cherished childhood home in the Sacramento Valley.

A woman ahead of her time, Carolyn developed an early passion for aviation. In 1942, she piloted a crop duster on her family's ranch, dropping sand into the rice fields to disperse geese, demonstrating a fearless independence that would define much of her life. After meeting Stanley, she became one of the first women in the United States to fly a helicopter, accomplishing this milestone in 1946 flying over the Palo Alto hills. Her support and adventurous spirit played an integral role in her husband's groundbreaking advancements in helicopter innovation.

Yet, above all else, Carolyn found her greatest joy in family. She is survived by her beloved sons, Jeffrey Hamilton Hiller and his wife Mary, and Stephen Stanley Hiller and his wife Charlene. She was the adored grandmother of seven granddaughters and their spouses: Maryann Hiller, Kristen Hiller, Constance Churchman, Samantha Trojanowski, Christina Hiller Myronowicz, Brooke



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Hiller, and Carolyn Kiper. Carolyn's love extended to her 18 great-grandchildren, all of whom were honored to celebrate her 100th birthday in the warmth of her Atherton home—a milestone that reflected a century of love, adventure, and family.

The Hiller family's legacy in aviation is rare and extraordinary, a passion that Carolyn and Stanley encouraged across generations. Jeff and Steve proudly carry on the tradition as third-generation pilots, while Christina, Brooke, and Maryann represent the fourth generation to take to the skies. Now, Christina and Cameron's son, Max Myronowicz, has embarked on his own journey, recently completing his first solo flight—placing him among the very few, if not the only, fifth-generation pilots in the country. This remarkable lineage is a testament to Carolyn's enduring spirit and the love of flight she helped foster in her family.

Carolyn was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Stanley Van Winkle Hiller, Jr., but her legacy lives on in the lives she touched and the world she helped shape. Together, Carolyn and Stanley's contributions to aviation and education continue to be honored through institutions like the Hiller Aviation Museum, founded in 1998, which preserves the rich history of helicopter advancements and the pioneering spirit that defined their lives.

A private family funeral service to celebrate Carolyn's extraordinary life will be held at Skylawn Memorial Park.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that donations be made to the Hiller Aviation Museum, ensuring that Carolyn and Stanley's passion for aviation innovation and education continues to inspire future generations of pilots and explorers.

Though she has taken her final flight, Carolyn's love, wisdom, and warmth will forever soar in our hearts.



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Carolyn by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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