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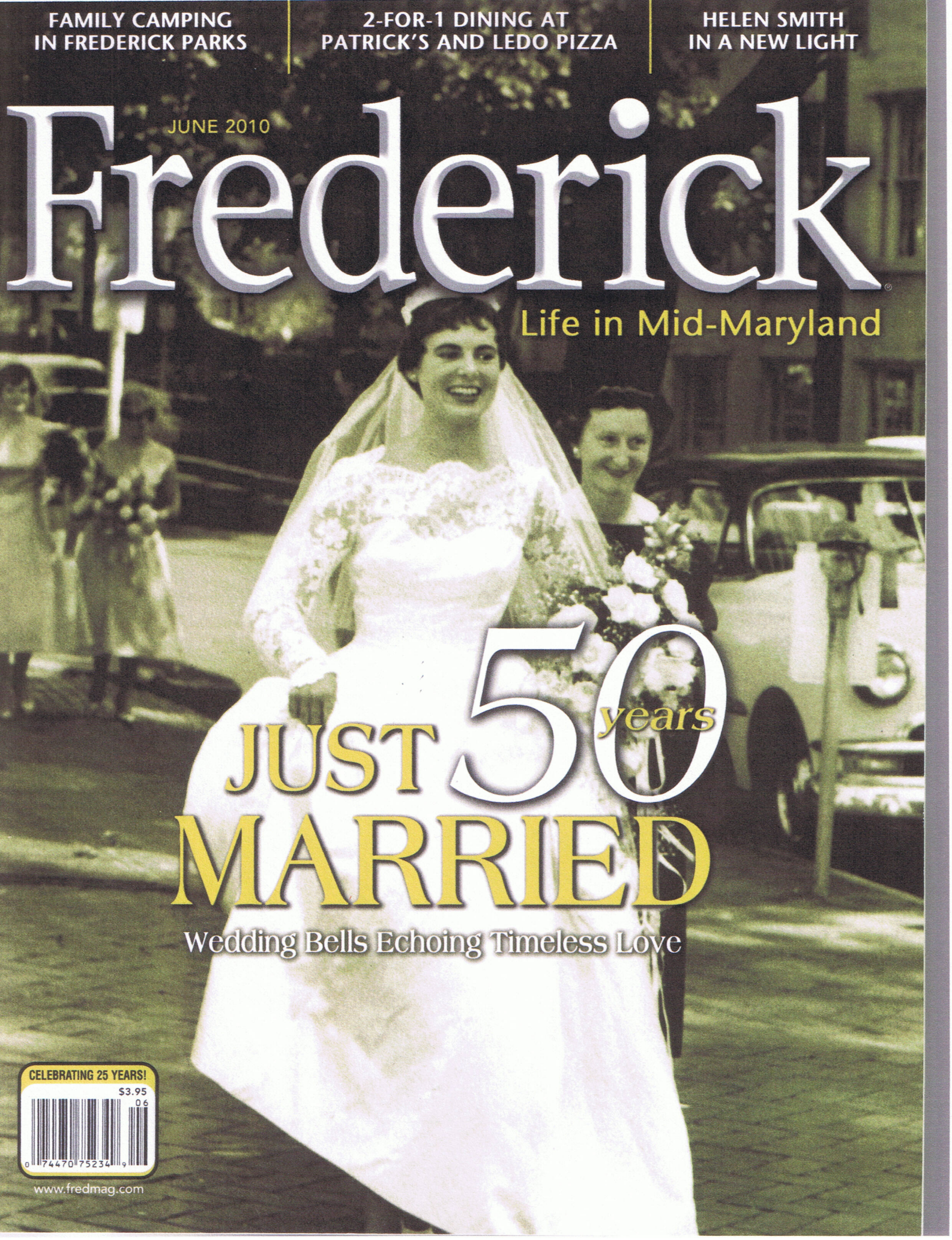
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# A Flight of Their Own

## The Air Race Classic—and the Spirit of Amelia Earhart—Lands in Frederick

By Guy Fletcher | Photography by Tess Colwell

Typically a month known for walks down the wedding aisle, June will bring a higher-energy march of sorts—and one with a strong feminist current—when planes scream down the runway at Frederick Memorial Airport.

The Air Race Classic, a four-day, 2,400-mile air race, will take teams of at least two women per plane through a grueling path from Fort Myers, Fla., to Tuscaloosa, Ala., to Hot Springs, Ark., to Cameron, Mo., to Murphysboro, Ill., to Elkhart, Ind., to Parkersburg, W.Va., before concluding at Frederick Municipal Airport on June 25. This marks the first time the race has ever been to Frederick in its 33-year history. “This is a huge deal for Frederick,” says Gail Norman, one of the organizers of the race’s local conclusion, known as the “terminus” in air race parlance.

For the racers, the challenge involves overcoming more than distance. In order to maximize the aerodynamics and speed of the many vintage aircraft participating in the race, many of the pilots will reduce ventilation, causing them to endure sweltering temperatures during their journey. “It’s going to be pretty tough,” says Urbana resident Lin Caywood, a terminus organizer

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**Above:** Sethany Van Lehn, president of the Sugarloaf Ninety-Nines, and Lin Caywood, Air Race Classic participant and member of the organization, in front of a classic 1946 Cessna 120. **Below, right:** Linda Litwin and Debi Dreyfuss, members of race team DC3 and participants in the Annual Air Race Classic.

who will be competing in the race for the first time. “It’s kind of an extreme sport, but that’s why they spread it out over the course of four days.”

The race traces its beginnings to The First Women’s Air Derby in 1929—an historic transcontinental event that featured groundbreaking aviator Amelia Earhart and other female pilots, all demonstrating their mastery in the cutting-edge technology of flight. “They had to really fight to be able to do that because men thought they shouldn’t be flying,” Norman says.

From that race grew The Ninety-Nines, a nonprofit organization formed by Earhart and other pilots to promote opportunities for women in aviation. The local chapter of The Ninety-Nines, the Sugarloaf Ninety-Nines, was formed four years ago and has taken on the role of organizing the terminus.

Racers are expected to begin arriving at Frederick Municipal Airport on Thursday, June 24, and will continue through the next day. The planes will arrive “fast and hot,” with a required timing run flyby at full throttle that will take place just prior to landing.

So far more than 50 teams have registered and more are expected by the time of the competition, a strong showing that is perhaps due to the race’s rare visit to the East Coast and near the nation’s capital. “The response is unprecedented,” Norman says. Even more impressive is the five local teams expected to



participate. “That’s just wonderful for this area to have that much participation,” Caywood says.

But Frederick is more than just the end of the race. Local organizers have capitalized on their role as the terminus by organizing a series of events that weekend to coincide with the competition. This will include the official welcome “meltdown” party for the race (open to the general public, but a ticket is required) and an informative program for local Girl Scouts at the airport. Other events include a VIP reception at the





Susan Beall cleans the plane she will be flying in the Air Race Classic.

Delaplaine Visual Arts Education Center and a screening of the documentary, “Breaking Through the Clouds: The First Women’s Air Derby” at Hood College.

Putting together an array of events to go with the race was a daunting challenge, given it was just a year ago that Frederick was named the race terminus. Add to that the fact that getting a race approved this close to Washington, D.C., and its web of restricted airspace required untangling a whole roll of red tape.

“For a fairly new organization to take on a commitment like this is huge,” says Caywood. Norman adds, “We were challenged on many levels, but like the 1929 racers, we were up to it.”

For more information about the Air Race Classic Terminus, including a complete list of local events, go to [www.arcterminus2010.com](http://www.arcterminus2010.com). ❖

## STAMPING HIS MARK

These pages feature the original artwork of local artist Frank DuVal, who was commissioned by the organizers of the Air Race Classic Terminus to create drawings to complement the local activities surrounding the competition. But before he could put anything to paper, he went out and learned all he could about women in aviation.



“I had decided instinctively that the way to ‘cover’ this event, prior to its taking place, was to focus on the women who have led the way, particularly from the granting of the first pilot’s license to a woman in 1910, to the first National Women’s Air Derby in 1929,” DuVal says. “... So I have been reading about extraordinary women from the first part of the 20th century, and I have been talking with some extraordinary women from the first part of the 21st century ... and doing a bit of flying.”

But why depict the aviators as postage stamps? Since he was a child, DuVal learned much about American history from collecting stamps, and over the years he incorporated stamps into his artwork. “I have always appreciated the postage stamp designs from the days before full-color printing was practical. So, it seemed logical to commemorate the pioneers in women’s aviation with giant postage stamps,” he says.

