

Ninety-Nines

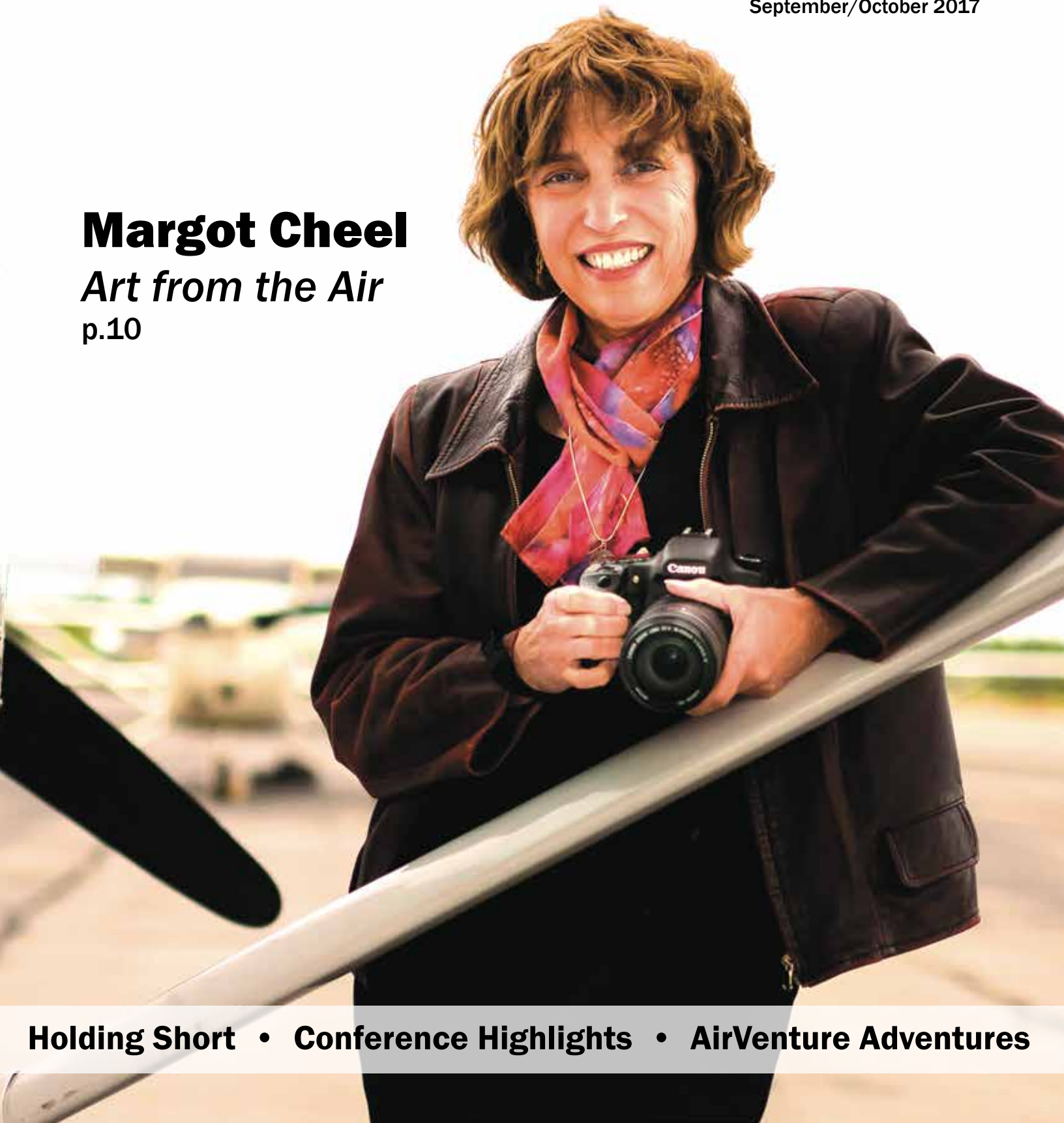
Inspiring Women Pilots Since 1929

September/October 2017

Margot Cheel

Art from the Air

p.10



Holding Short • Conference Highlights • AirVenture Adventures



Ninety-Nines

Inspiring Women Pilots Since 1929

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Ninety-Nine Member-At-Large Refilwe Ledwaba, left, from South Africa, with Yvonne van den Dool, the first Governor of The 99s Section in South Africa.



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President Jan McKenzie with around-the-world pilot Adrian Eichhorn.



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We're still looking for a few issues of 99s publications to complete the organization's online library dating back to 1929.

On The Cover

When Eastern New England Chapter member Margot Cheel was driving home from dropping off her child at college in Maine and began noticing small airports all along her route, little did she realize that this was going to be the beginning of a new source of personal and artistic inspiration. Starting with her \$49 introductory flight and earning her private pilot certification, Margot has let her passion for flight lead her to a new facet of artistic expression, that of aerial photographer and book publisher. Her books are a delight for everyone from age "9 to 94." Her passion for flight has also lead her on many adventures in every corner of North America.

Photo by Ken Burg





Margot Cheel Art From The Air

A \$49 demo flight in 1997 ultimately led to a creative career in aerial photography

BY JANN CLARK, *Eastern New England Chapter*

Margot Cheel is an accomplished aerial photographer. She was an arts major at Middlebury College and stayed involved in the arts in various ways as she raised her two children. As her younger child was preparing to leave for college, Margot happened to participate in a creativity workshop that inspired and encouraged her to take risks. And she did, taking her love of the arts in a new direction.

She discovered that direction one day as she drove home from Maine after dropping her last child off at college and casually noticed the many small airports along the way. When she got home, she went to a bookstore and picked up a book about female aviators.

She read an article in *Time* magazine about a woman in mid-life who, in one small plane flight, found a profound perspective from the views above. Finally, a friend dropped in and talked about her son, an Air Force flyer, who had been urging her to try flying. With all these messages, a portentous adventure was born.

A \$49 demo flight at Marshfield Airport in 1997 ignited a passion for flying that has gripped Margot ever since. She started taking flying lessons and soon obtained her private pilot certificate. However, it wasn't until a fortuitous encounter at a church fundraiser in 1998 that Margot discovered the joy of aerial photography. A pilot had offered to photograph people's houses from the air and donate his fee to the fundraiser. It was a beautiful autumn day, and Margot offered to go along to help with the photography. The pictures came out great, and people were happy to pay for them. A career in aerial photography was born.

Besides publishing two books of her photographs, Margot has taken aerial photographs for homeowners, real estate firms and environmental



*Cape Cod National Seashore
— one of nature's shifting sea
and sand forms, from Mar-
got's book "Sea & Sand from
the Sky."*



groups in the New England states, South Florida, the Pacific Northwest and Ontario, Canada. She has taken photos of Mt. Rainier in Washington State and Mt. Denali in Alaska.

A favorite photo expedition took place in Hawaii at The 99s International Convention in 2010. She and another 99 rented a Cessna Caravan with an instructor, who pointed out

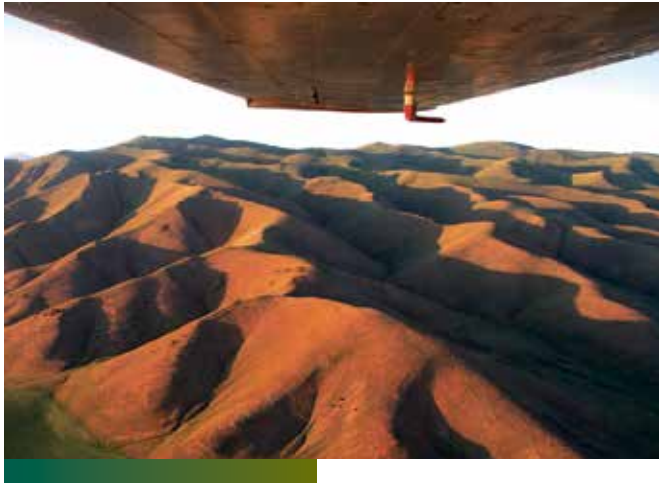
sights she wouldn't have known to look for.

An exciting and challenging photo adventure was the 2013 Air Race Classic, where Margot was the third teammate and photographer in Olga Mitchell's 1977 Cessna Cardinal. Olga, Eastern New England Chapter, was PIC, and Mary Build, Katahdin Wings Chapter, was co-pilot. There were weather

challenges throughout the race, with downdrafts in the mountains at the start, a dust storm just behind them at one departure, and delays on the first day when they reached the airport within seven minutes of the official time limit for the day. They made it, and the next three days of the race as well. Margot took some wonderful pictures and has put them into a slide show for

presentations to The 99s, the New England Air Museum, the Aero Club of New England and other groups.

Margot's Fine Art Aerial Photography (margotcheel.com) has been shown in juried exhibitions and has appeared in local magazines, *Cape Cod Life* and *South Shore Living*. She was featured on Boston WCVB-TV's *Chronicle*, showing



Upper: Two triptychs of Margot's aerial photos printed on canvas. They were on exhibit at Highfield Hall, Falmouth, Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

Lower: A photo captured enroute in the Air Race Classic near Logan, Utah.

in 2016. She initially tested the images on her four-year-old grandson, then found that fifth graders also loved discovering shapes in her photos. Adults generally buy the book for their kids or grandkids but get caught up in the game, so Margot markets the book to “kids from 4 to 94!”

“It’s a way to spark creative imagination, connect to nature and look beyond the first glance – beyond labeling,” says Margot.

Margot first heard about The 99s when a member called to congratulate her on her private pilot certificate. She attended a meeting, where she found a compatible group of women offering mutual support, education and opportunities to be a part of women pilot history. Along with aerial photography and her responsibilities within The 99s, Margot continues to facilitate creativity workshops and mentor people seeking to find and follow their dreams.

Encouraged by many to create a book of her aerials, Margot produced and published *Sea and Sand from the Sky* in 2012, a full-color coffee table book with quotes from aviators. That year at The 99s International Convention in Providence, Rhode Island, Margot’s book was given as a thank you to all presenters.

Her second book developed through an interesting phenomenon: kids who came to her photography exhibits would often visualize a figure in the landscape photo. Parents might see something else in the same image, and a conversation would ensue. That inspired Margot to create a picture book for children, *What Do You See? Finding Shapes from the Sky*,

She joined the Eastern New England Chapter in 2002 and has been an active member since. She has served as the Chapter newsletter editor back when the newsletter was photocopied, stuffed into envelopes by hand and mailed; as Vice Chair and as Chapter Chair. On the Section level, she is the Oral History Chair for the New England Section, producing video interviews of our oldest members before their stories are lost forever, and is currently the New England Section Vice Governor

Margot and the New England Section are looking forward to hosting next year’s Air Race Classic terminus in Fryeburg, Maine.