

Ely Air Lines –

Her Majesty, The Fighter Pilot

by Mike Ely and Linda Street-Ely

Linda: Britain’s Royal Family is no stranger to aviation. William flew helicopters. Harry flew Apaches. Andrew flew helicopters in the Falklands. Fergie earned both airplane and helicopter pilot certificates and was the first woman in the Royal Family to earn her wings.

It seems that Queen Suthida of Thailand decided the bar needed raising. It’s like she looked over the royal aviation record and said, Hold my tiara.

She’s 48 years old and is currently training to fly the Saab JAS 39 Gripen, a supersonic, single-engine, delta-wing, multirole fighter capable of roughly twice the speed of sound. Her training for this jet began August 20 at Royal Thai Air Force Wing 7 in Surat Thani and is scheduled to continue through September 4.

Mind you, this isn’t a royal publicity stunt in which Her Majesty gets strapped into the back seat for a fast ride and emerges with windswept hair. Nope, not this Queen. In the Gripen program, she’s following all Royal Thai Air Force procedures and is expected to take her solo flight this week. When she solos this jet, I believe she will become the first reigning queen in history to fly a fighter aircraft.

Suthida has been flying for years. She began military flight training in 2010 in the Cessna T-41, later completed an Army aviation course, and continued with the Royal Thai Air Force in the CT-4E and PC-9. Then she went to Germany for more training, earning her private and commercial pilot certificates, flying aircraft including the Cessna 172, Mooney



M20 and Piper Seneca. She racked up a Boeing 737 type rating in Europe and an Airline Transport Pilot certificate in Thailand. Suffice it to say, those aren’t honorary wings pinned onto a royal uniform. This ain’t no pampered princess; she’s living proof that you’re not limited by the conditions you’re born into.

She’s flown as co-pilot of the royal Boeing 737-400 and 737-800. During a 2025 state visit to Bhutan, King Maha Vajiralongkorn himself flew the royal 737 with Queen Suthida as co-pilot. That in itself has got to be a first and as-yet only.

In preparation for the Gripen, the Queen trained in

the L-39 advanced jet trainer, spent time in Gripen simulators and visited Wing 7 to study the airplane’s systems and talk with pilots currently flying it, all in order to prepare to ace the test and solo the Gripen.

The Queen’s training places her in an entirely different category from royals who have earned pilot certificates before her.

A few years ago, I wrote a reimagined, abbreviated version of a classic novel. I titled it, “Little Women: Fighter Pilots.” I hadn’t imagined “Queen of Thailand: Fighter Pilot.”

There have been queens who rode in carriages, queens who christened ships and queens whose faces appeared on money. This one is, literally, Queen of the skies, an ATP about to solo a supersonic fighter. As a fellow ATP, I have only one thing to say: Your Majesty, you rock!

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THAI QUEEN SUTHIDA

FLB Title

opens in Liberty

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backed by experienced professionals dedicated to ensuring every transaction is handled accurately, efficiently, and with exceptional customer care. The company was founded on the belief that local relationships matter and remains committed to serving the communities it calls home.

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DAYTON SENIOR CENTER BINGO

Pictured are a few of our loyal bingo players.
L-R: Eyvonne Mabry, Leora Boullion, Sherren Drake, Silvia Herrera, Roni Mabry, Kenneth Mabry.

Monday, August 24, got the week off to a good start for area seniors who enjoyed a delicious meal in the Senior Room of the Dayton Community. Volunteer Marilynn Caughlin provided a menu of meatloaf, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans and rolls. Shawn Francis made pumpkin spice cookies for dessert. Dayton Senior Center, Inc. furnished Blue Bell ice cream to celebrate all the August birthdays. Thanks to Leora Boullion for the ice cream. After lunch Eyvonne Mabry hosted bingo. The volunteers are very much appreciated. Their help with meals and activities is invaluable.

Dayton Senior Center Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)(3), sponsors lunch and bingo each Monday. Lunches are served at 11 a.m., Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Anyone over 55 is welcome. There’s no sign up and no cost.

Jones Public Library Memorials, Honorariums

MEMORIALS

In memory of **Pamela Diane Baker** - *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Angels All Around: 101 Inspirational Stories of Miracles, Divine Intervention, and Answered Prayers*, given by JoAnn Gajdosik

In memory of **William “Bill” Bartz** - *Bird Planet*, given by the Nonas

In memory of **William “Bill” Bartz** - *The Bird Book: The Stories, Science, and History of Birds*, given by David and Peggy Wallet

In memory of **Anna Lee Campbell** - *The Christmas Stranger and God’s Colorful Kingdom*, given by Lambda Alpha Sigma

In memory of **Anna Lee Campbell** - *The Big Texas Cookbook: The Food That Defines the Lone Star State and Look and Learn - First Words for Catholic Kids*, given by Lamar and Neal Iverson

In memory of **Lois Conner** - *Edith Wharton*, given by Norbet Westmoreland

In memory of **Michael Ennor** - *Our Shed: A Father-Daughter Building Story and Girls Garage: How to Use Any Tool, Tackle Any Project, and Build the World You Want to See*, given by the City of Dayton

In memory of **Donnie**

Green - *Hostage and Black Saturday: An Unfiltered Account of the October 7th Attack on Israel and the War in Gaza*, given by the Lynn Satterwhite

In memory of **Jeff Meade** - *Architecture: The Definitive Visual Guide*, given by Lambda Alpha Sigma

HONORARIUMS

Honoring **Colin Errington** - *Lottie Moon: The Girl Who Reached the World and Around the World with 80 Missionaries*,

given by Lambda Alpha Sigma
Honoring **Mike George** - *Billy the Kid Dances His Heart Out*, given by Lambda Alpha Sigma

Honoring **Martin Mudd** - *Mission Driven: The Path to a Life of Purpose*, given by Lambda Alpha Sigma

DONATIONS

A monetary donation given by the Williamson and Till families

TVE sponsorships available

LIBERTY - The TVE is fast approaching (October 16-24) and sponsorships are now being accepted now in a multitude of levels that provide a number of benefits. Additionally you can show your support with the 100 Club, Youth Premium Livestock Auction and Freezer Sales, Add-on Sales, Youth Rodeo Prizes and Livestock Awards.

TVE, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, relies on the generosity of its

sponsors. Your sponsorship is tax-deductible and provides unique benefits, including event marketing, banners, rodeo tickets, parking passes, and access to our exclusive sponsor hospitality room-complete with catered meals and an open bar from Wednesday to Saturday evenings.

To find out more, visit tvefair.com and select Get Involved or contact the TVE office at 936-336-7455.

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Dayton VFD golf,

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a tent and pass out items. Interact with all participants (network).

Beverage Sponsor (\$500): Provides all beverages to golfers throughout the day. Each golfer is given 5 drink tickets. Yard sign near entrance of the restaurant. Can set up a tent and interact with participants (network).

Breakfast Sponsor (\$500): Provides breakfast for all AM participants. Yard sign near entrance of the restaurant. Can set up a tent and interact with participants (network).

Lunch Sponsor (\$2,000): Provides lunch for all partic-

ipants. Yard sign near entrance of restaurant. Can set up tent and interact with all participants (network). Sponsor highlight on DVFD Facebook page.

All proceeds from the tournament will directly benefit the Dayton VFD by helping fund truck maintenance, tool purchases and upkeep, and PPE (personal protective equipment) purchases and maintenance.

Those interested in playing or becoming a sponsor, please contact Josh Alley at 281-726-5046 or Jackson Craft at 832-364-7937.