



# A Youthful Pasion for Fun

BY MILLY KILLINGSWORTH

I was born in Spokane, Washington, on December 16, 1911. My parents, Jens and Laura Thomsen, emigrated from Denmark in the early 1900s to Spokane, through Wisconsin. I attended Bemis Grade School and North Central High School, where I was on the swim team, tennis team, played baseball, and belonged to the hiking club. We lived two blocks from Corbin Park. There were two tennis courts and I got up at 5:00 A.M. and played tennis every day.

Miss Pinkham, our instructor, was young and strict. She would push you over the limit, but you sure learned. Miss Pinkham had those of us on the swim team stay after school to practice. I used to walk home with a wet head from swimming, my hair frozen stiff. It was a two-mile hike from North Central to home, and there were no busses in those days. Everyone walked. I remember a lot of times I was so tired, I thought I'd never make it.

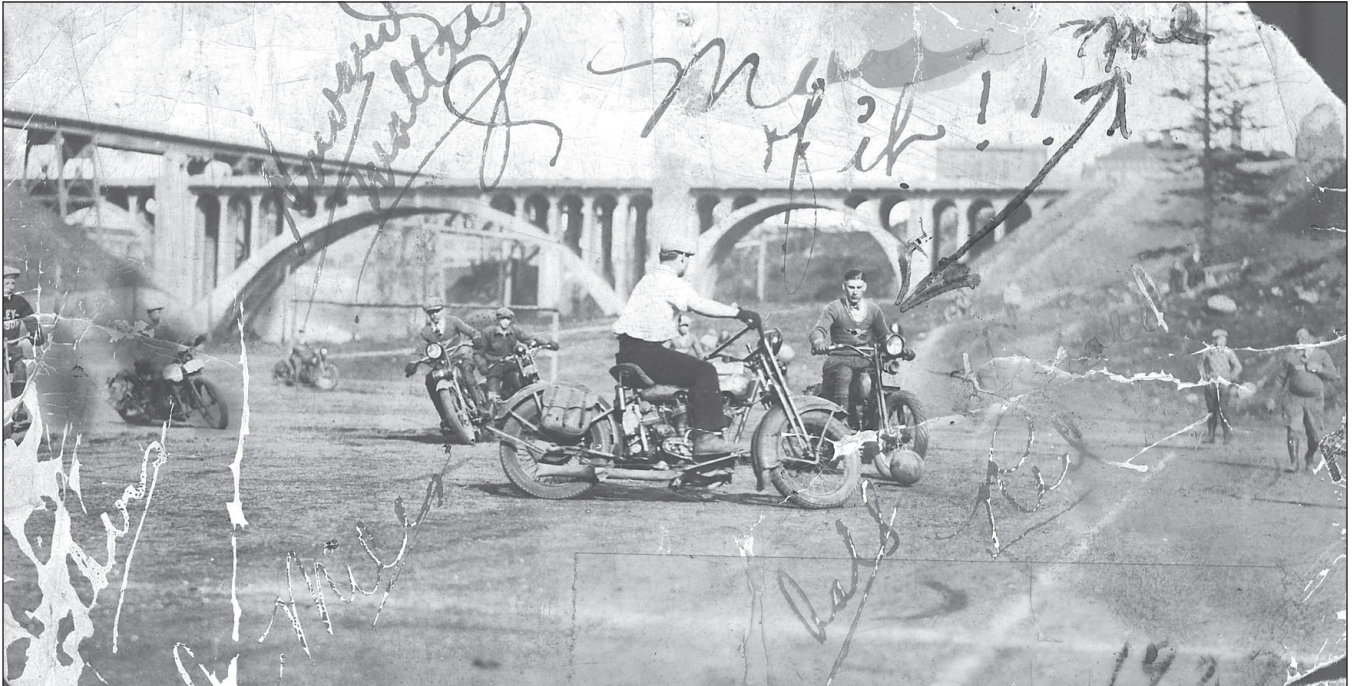
My favorite subject was Botany. One day we had snakes, and one of my swim team friends chased me with a big bull snake from the third to the first floor. It was the talk of the school. Guess we made enough noise, her laughing and me yelling. I think high school was one of my favorite times.

When I was about seventeen, I joined the Harley Davidson Motorcycle Club in Spokane. My brother, Harold, was a member and needed a partner, so he chose me. He taught me to ride those huge Harleys – no small motorcycles in 1927. We went some place every Sunday, two-by-two down the highways. There were few cars, so it was wide-open spaces for miles. One of our favorite places for speed was Deep Creek (the other side of where Fairchild Air Force Base is now located). That is the strip where I got the record of eighty-four miles per hour. It was on approximately

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**Manito Park Visit, 1936** — Milly enjoying the scenery at Manito Park.

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**Motorcycle Polo, 1927** — Milly, at age seventeen, and brother, Harold, play in a game of motorcycle polo in Peaceful Valley. The Monroe Street bridge can be seen in the background when the railroad went over the top of the bridge.

six to eight miles of straight, flat road. We had hill climbs in the summer. In those days there were plenty of open hills close to the city. Today, large homes are built on those hills.

Harold also took up flying lessons at Felts Field. Harold and the owner decided I should learn, too. He took me up in the two seat bi-plane and did nose-dives, loop d' loops, and anything else he could think of. When we got back to earth, I said, "no more lessons for me."

Another time Harold, his best friend, and I drove out to Newman Lake, where Harold drove the car out in the middle of the frozen lake. We would go very fast, slam on the brakes, and make wheelies. Next thing we knew, the Sheriff stopped by, gave us a lecture, and let us go. Guess we learned a good lesson. The ice was really thick, but now I realize it could have broken, and we would have been three drowned, stupid young kids.

In 1943, Spokane was chosen for an Air base, and they were hiring anyone. I applied and started first in a big old empty building near Hilliard. All we did was report to work and stand around listening to some military man saying soon as the base was built, we would all move there. Finally, after many months, we

did. At first we were in huge hangers with mud floors and more standing around, doing nothing. We were freezing cold and talking and wondering what we were going to do. Eventually we were all given jobs. I did office work.

Eventually I moved to Seattle, where I lived with two of my sisters and a niece. There, I worked for the Signal corps. (one of only two women hired). We all had a briefing before being hired about what the enemy would do to us if captured. We had to watch horrible movies about torture. The FBI investigated all of my relatives. My dad found that out a few months after I was hired.

I took an oath that I wouldn't discuss where I worked or what I did or heard. It was very hard to keep quiet when everyone was always speculating and talking about the war and how close the Japanese ships were to our coast. Radar had just been invented. I knew where every Radar Depot was, how close the Japanese ships were, and also how places were camouflaged. I worked for two years until 1945. I lied when I left and said I lost my I.D. card – I still have it.

I have had ninety-five remarkable years and still live in my own apartment. I enjoy sharing my memories with readers. ☺