



**PRESS RELEASE**  
For 21 January 2017

## **On This Day in History: Female-Powered Flight Took Off**

Lausanne, Switzerland, 18 January 2017 - **Thirty years ago, on 21 January 1987, American triathlete Lois McCallin set three women's world records for human-powered flight – and they still stand today.**

Stepping out onto a dried-up lakebed at Edwards Air Force Base in California at 8.30am on Wednesday 21 January 1987, 29-year-old Lois McCallin was about to make history.

At the peak of physical condition, this amateur triathlete had been in training for months for what she was about to do – cycle a gossamer-light plane into the air and fly it by leg-power alone for the next 15km at an average speed of 20km/h.

The Michelob Light Eagle was an experimental human-powered aircraft built as part of the Daedalus Project. The ultimate aim of the Daedalus Project was to fly a human-powered plane from Crete to the island of Santorini in the Mediterranean, recreating the mythical flight of Daedalus and his less-fortunate son, Icarus.

The success of that project though was far in the future as McCallin limbered up for her experimental but record-breaking flight.

Her job on 21 January was to take off and fly the 41.7kg plane around a 15km course, maintaining level flight and passing over regulatory 2m-high stanchions to really 'prove' the plane was in the air and flying high.

Rolling along the concrete runway next to the dry lakebed, the plane's lightweight wings were stabilised by a helper at each tip, but once in the air, McCallin, who weighed 54.9kg, was on her own. First she had to fly the Light Eagle to a turnpoint 6.8km away, flying just metres above the ground. She successfully reached that turnpoint – and with it set a women's world record for straight-line distance for human-powered aircraft.

Staying in the air she flew on further, to the second turnpoint. She rounded that and flew the final leg to a third turnpoint. Continuing straight she landed the plane 327m later. She had flown a total distance of 15.444km and been in the air for 37 minutes 38 seconds.

Her flight set three women's world records:

1. [Distance around a closed circuit](#)
2. [Straight distance](#)
3. [Duration](#)

Those records still stand today.

The day after McCallin set her three records, fellow pilot Glenn Tremml flew the Michelob Light Eagle around a 58.66km closed circuit course to set an overall world record for distance around a closed circuit course in human-powered flight. That record too, still stands too.

The flights made history, and they also provided invaluable information for the researchers planning their bigger flight in the Mediterranean. The history of the Daedalus Project is long, but 15 months later, on 23 April 1988, the Daedalus Project successfully flew the successor to the Light Eagle, a human-powered plane named MIT Daedalus, 115km from Crete to Santorini. That historic flight

earned international attention, and also has never been bettered.

## **PHOTOS**

Rights-free photos are available to download [here](#).

## **NOTES**

### **Lois McCallin's records on the FAI website**

[www.fai.org/record-experimental-new-technologies](http://www.fai.org/record-experimental-new-technologies)

### **Read more: Real life Daedalus unveils plaque to historic human-powered flight**

[www.fai.org/ciaca-slider-news/41366-real-life-daedalus-unveils-plaque-to-historic-human-powered-flight](http://www.fai.org/ciaca-slider-news/41366-real-life-daedalus-unveils-plaque-to-historic-human-powered-flight)

### **Links of records:**

- Distance around a closed circuit: <http://www.fai.org/fai-record-file/?recordId=386>
- Straight distance: <http://www.fai.org/fai-record-file/?recordId=387>
- Duration: <http://www.fai.org/fai-record-file/?recordId=388>

## **About FAI**

The World Air Sports Federation, FAI, is the world governing body for air sports and for certifying world aviation and space records. The FAI was founded in 1905 and is a non-governmental and non-profit-making organisation recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

FAI activities include Aerobatics, Aeromodelling, Airships, Amateur-Built and Experimental Aircraft, Balloons, Gliding, Hang Gliding, Helicopters, Manpowered Flying, Microlights, Parachuting, Paragliding, Paramotors, Power Flying and all other Aeronautic and Astronautic sporting activities.

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