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WOMEN IN MILITARY AND AVIATION HISTORY

Since Women's Armed Services Integration Act, female service members have excelled

By C. Todd Lopez

DOD News

On June 12, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed into law the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, which allowed, for the first time, women to serve as regular members of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.

In the years since, women have made huge advances in the U.S. armed forces. And in doing so have proven that those who worked to put the act in front of the president were right.

"Of course ... women have always stepped up to defend our country," said Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III during a commemorative event last year in the Pentagon marking the 75th anniversary of the act. "In our Revolutionary War, women operated behind enemy lines as spies. In the Civil War, some 3,000 women served as nurses for the Union Army. And during World War I, women were translators and accountants, and they operated switchboards."

In the audience at the event were four women veterans from World War II, including Marine Corps veteran Norma Rambow,

who served as a field cook and in Marine mess halls; Army veteran Marion Marques, who served as a cryptographer and later a dental hygienist; Navy veteran Corrine Robinson, who served as a corpsman in the U.S. Naval Woman's Reserve; and Army veteran Hilary Rosado, who served as an imagery analyst.

"Let's thank all of these great Americans for their service once again," Austin said.

Following the World War II service of those women, and others like them, Austin said, U.S. military leaders began to endorse making women full and permanent members of the U.S. armed forces. It was a challenge, he said.

"At one hearing, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee questioned why women should serve in our military on the same basis as men," Austin said. "The first witness to respond was Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower. And he said, simply, 'We need them.'"

Austin said the U.S. military is the best fighting force in history, and that keeping it that way requires bringing the best warfighters on board in every domain of conflict.



U.S. government photograph

President Harry S. Truman stands in front of the White House and holds a copy of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, which created regular and reserve status for women in the military, June 12, 1948.

"The only way to make that happen is by drawing on the talents of all of our people, and not just men — who happen to represent less than half of the U.S. population," he said.

Even more, Austin said, the military must be accommodating of women in service — and there is more work to be done, including the elimination of bias, sexual harassment and sexual assault. He also said military service must be made compatible with raising a family — for both mothers and fathers. All those things, he said, are priorities for the Department of Defense.

Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks said last year's anniversary serves as an opportunity to celebrate the talent, tenacity and expertise women have brought to the DOD mission. Women in the U.S. military today, she said, can serve in combat roles, become army rangers, fighter pilots, and four-star generals.

"Women in uniform continue to make history every day, taking on roles and responsibilities that were not before possible or attainable," she said. "The full integra-

tion of women into our armed forces has only made our military stronger and our nation safer ... and more secure. And in addition to that, it moved the entire nation closer to the promise of full equality ... reinforced the power of unity around our shared values ... and underscored that we, as a nation, are more effective when we draw on the talents of qualified Americans willing to serve."

Like Austin, Hicks said despite the 75-plus years of woman in the military, more must be done.

"It is our responsibility to break down even more barriers for all of us and for the generations to come," she said. "I, for one, am proud to help lead a department that continues to expand opportunities to women; one that is committed to advancing gender equity and equality; and one that acknowledges that the service and the sacrifice of all of those who serve in defense of this nation."



DOD photograph by Air Force Staff Sgt. John Wright

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III delivers remarks during a ceremony commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 at the Pentagon, June 12, 2023.



DOD photograph by Air Force Staff Sgt. John Wright

Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks exchanges greetings with veterans attending a ceremony commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 at the Pentagon, June 12, 2023.

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WASPS

Women Airforce Service Pilots and their Fight for Veteran Status

By Stephen Arionus, PhD

AFPC

JBSA San Antonio — On the evening of August 23, 1943, a pilot named Mabel Rawlinson died in a fiery crash in the North Carolina swamplands near Fort Davis. Unbeknownst to her, she was doing night exercises in an aircraft that another pilot previously flagged for engine trouble, according to Katherine Sharp Landdeck, in *The Women with Silver Wings*.

In a separate incident, when a woman pilot trainee died in a crash, her classmates had to send around a collection to return her body to her family because the government would not foot the bill for the expense, Rep Shirley Neil Pettis said in the same hearing: *Granting Veterans Status to WASPS*, 95th Cong, 1st sess..

On October 2, 1944, in Victorville, CA, another plane crashed killing all on board. In that incident, all but one crew member received a funeral with full military honors. That last crew member and her “family received nothing,” said Rep Margaret Heckler. Each of the pilots who gave their lives in service to their nation were Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP); however, due to a bureaucratic technicality, the federal government classified all WASPs as civilian employees rather than military during World War II. This was never meant to be a permanent status. At the time, many believed WASPs would eventually be militarized like other all-women auxiliary units.

“Civil service was a convenient expedient to get the program started,” stated retired Air Force Col Bruce Arnold, the son of Gen Hap Arnold. The United States just needed pilots. Gen Henry “Hap” Arnold worked on the principle of “get it done now and worry about the details later” according to his son, Col Bruce Arnold. It would more than 30 years and an act of Congress before WASPs would receive the recognition of their efforts in WWII, and the status as military veteran.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and brought the United States into the war, the nation was woefully underprepared. It would take months for the United States to become the “arsenal of democracy” that President Roosevelt envisioned; it took time to convert plants outfitted to mass produce cars into ones that could output a B-24 Liberator every 63 minutes.

Jacqueline Cochran, the famed pilot, air racer, and one of the brains behind WASP, understood that the bottleneck in terms of pilot production would be their training. She believed WASPs could help produce more pilots by shouldering some logistical burdens thus allowing male pilots to focus on combat related training and overseas duty.

Cochran outlined her proposal for Eleanor Roosevelt, which ultimately became the roadmap for WASP with the addition of some modifications including the incorporation of Nancy Harkness Love’s independent pilot program for women, the Women’s Auxiliary Ferry Squadron (WAFs).

Between 1942 and 1944, over 25,000 women applied to become a WASP but only around 1,100 completed training and earned their silver pilot’s wings according to historian Katherine Sharp Landdeck. Thirty-eight WASPs died in service of their nation. WASPs flew 12,000 aircraft 60 million miles thus allowing male pilots to focus on combat related training.

Although their primary responsibility was to ferry newly built planes from the factory floor to points of embarkation, WASPs also towed aerial targets for aerial combat training for their male peers, and some even served as check pilots. Chief of the Army Air Corps (AAC), General Henry “Hap” Arnold described WASP’s service as a complete success. Moreover, he said it was “on record that women can fly as well as men” and that they could fly any plane—from AT-6s to B-29s, WASP flew those each platform “like veterans.”

Such praise from Gen. Arnold was notable especially because he was skeptical of women’s ability to fly before he met WASPs. By the end of their service, they had made Gen. Arnold a believer. At the last WASP graduation on Dec. 7, 1977, Arnold, one of the most respected military pilots of his age, praised WASP’s competency and skill during a time when much of society still believed that women should remain in the domestic sphere, certainly not flying a military aircraft.

In 1944, with the end of the war in sight, the War Department disbanded the WASP program five days before Christmas with little warning, a plan for demobilization (some women had to pay for their own way home), and without the militarization of their unit, something most assumed would eventually happen.



Photo by 2001 SNOWBOUND/afm.com

Women Airforce Service Pilots, left to right, Frances Green, Margaret Kirchner, Ann Waldner and Blanche Osborn at Lockbourne Army Air Field, Ohio, 1944. These women pilots were some of the first to ferry B-17 “Flying Fortress” bombers. More than 1,000 WASP provided essential military air support in the United States during World War II.



Courtesy photo

Fifiella, the official mascot of the WASPs, designed by Disney.

told Eleanor Roosevelt that women pilots should be commissioned directly into the Army using existing authorities, as quoted in *Women Pilots with the AAF, 1941-1944*.

WAC placed certain limitations on women that did not suit experienced, skilled female aviators. Congress gave authority to the AAC to make temporary officer appointments but the AAC chose not to do so adhering to a narrow interpretation of the law stating it applied to men only. Years later Senator Goldwater pointedly remarked in the 1977 hearing: “women could be commissioned as typists, file clerks or nurses, but when they wanted to fly aircraft, women were not even considered to be ‘persons’ in the eyes of the law.”

After the war, WASP veterans continued to press for the recognition to which they believed they were entitled. Surviving members enlisted the aid of prominent voices including Senator Barry Goldwater, Congresswomen Margaret Heckler and Lindy Boggs, along with retired Col Bruce Arnold. Their efforts led to Congressional hearings in 1977. This was not the first time a bill for the militariza-

tion of WASPs came before Congress.

Those earlier efforts failed in large part because of opposition from the same type of groups who opposed the 1977 bill: the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and Disabled American Veterans among others. Their argument against recognition in 1977 was that granting veteran status to WASPs would open the floodgates to other people thereby diminishing the status of, and entitlements to, veterans everywhere. These fears proved unfounded.

Congress passed the GI Bill Improvement Act of 1977, which retroactively granted WASPs “active-duty status” for the “purposes of laws administered by the Veterans’ Administration.” In 2016, Congress passed a separate law affording WASPs burial rights in Arlington National Cemetery after the Secretary of the Army denied WASP Elaine Harmon burial at the cemetery.

Let’s take a moment to remember the remarkable history of the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots. Their story reminds us that the term “veteran” and the rights associated with it are not etched in stone, unaltered for time eternal. Rather that designation is granted by the state and is therefore susceptible to the vicissitudes of Capitol Hill politics. Nevertheless, from the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (precursor to the Veterans Administration) in the aftermath of the Civil War to equitably extending GI Bill benefits to all who served in WWII, veterans’ tenacity ensured that the state kept the promises it made—both implicit and explicit—in exchange for their faithful service to the nation.

As the United States moves away from a perennial war footing to one of peacetime, with thousands of citizen-soldiers becoming citizen-veterans each year, it becomes imperative for us to remember the debts we owe to previous generations who safeguarded our democracy because, as the history of the WASPs has shown, it is far too easy for us to forget.

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Artemis II will send first woman, person of color around the moon



By NASA

After last year's successful launch of NASA's Space Launch System (SLS), carrying the Orion spacecraft, NASA is moving to the next part of the Artemis mission.

With the Artemis mission, NASA will land the first woman and first person of color on the Moon, using innovative technologies to explore more of the lunar surface than ever before and collaborating with commercial and international partners to establish a long-term presence on the Moon.

NASA and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) announced the four astronauts who will venture around the Moon on Artemis II, the first crewed mission on NASA's path to establishing a long-term presence at the Moon for science and exploration through Artemis. The agencies revealed the crew members during



NASA photo

Artemis II NASA astronaut Christina Koch greets members of the Artemis launch team inside Firing Room 1 in the Launch Control at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida on Aug. 7, 2023. Koch and fellow Artemis II astronauts Victor Glover, Reid Wiseman, and CSA (Canadian Space Agency) astronaut Jeremy Hansen are at the center to meet workers and tour facilities. The approximately 10-day Artemis II flight will test NASA's foundational human deep space exploration capabilities, the Space Launch System rocket and Orion spacecraft, for the first time with astronauts and will pave the way for lunar surface missions, including landing the first woman and the first person of color on the Moon.

an event at Ellington Field near NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston.

"For the first time in more than 50 years, these individuals – the Artemis II crew – will be the first humans to fly to the vicinity of the Moon. Among the crew are the first woman, first person of color, and first Canadian on a lunar mission, and all four astronauts will represent the best of humanity as they explore for the benefit of all," said Director Vanessa Wyche, NASA Johnson. "This mission paves the way for the expansion of human deep space exploration and presents new opportunities for scientific discoveries, commercial, industry and academic partnerships and the Artemis Generation."

"The Artemis II crew represents thousands of people working tirelessly to bring us to the stars. This is their crew, this is our crew, this is humanity's crew," said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson. "NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Hammock Koch, and CSA astronaut Jeremy Hansen, each has their own story, but, together, they represent our creed: E pluribus unum — out of many, one. Together, we are ushering in a new era of exploration for a new generation of star sailors and dreamers — the Artemis Generation."

See ARTEMIS, Page 8



NASA photo by Kevin Davis and Chris Coleman
In this photo, NASA's Space Launch System (SLS), carrying the Orion spacecraft, lifts off the pad at Launch Complex 39B at the agency's Kennedy Space Center in Florida at 1:47 a.m. EST on Nov. 16, 2022. Set on a path to the Moon, this officially began the Artemis I mission.



NASA photo by Riley McClenaghan

The Artemis II crew cheers with the crowd while attending the NCAA Men's Final Four national championship game at NRG Stadium in Houston in 2023. From left: NASA astronaut Artemis II Pilot Victor Glover, Mission Specialist Christina Koch, and Commander Reid Wiseman, and CSA (Canadian Space Agency) astronaut Mission Specialist Jeremy Hansen.



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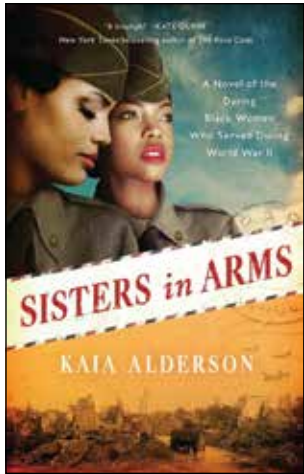
Books on women in military and aviation

By Emma Uribe

Aerotech News staff

For readers interested in learning more about women's struggle for parity in the military and in the sky, here are a few books on my "To be read" list.

Sisters in Arms



Sisters in Arms is a historical novel by Kaia Alderson about the true story of Six Triple Eight, the

only all-Black battalion of the Women's Army Corps during World War II. The story focuses on Grace Steele and Eliza Jones, among the first Black women allowed to serve and how they navigate their way through the segregated army. They form part of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion to ensure American service men can communicate with their loved ones during the war. The novel explores the challenges and risks they faced deploying to England and France.

Why it's on the "To Be Read" (TBR) list — I've read a few stories about the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion in *Aerotech News & Review*. Also, this book is currently being read by a local library book club. So, I'd see if it's currently being read in a book club near you. Book clubs are a great way to meet new people.

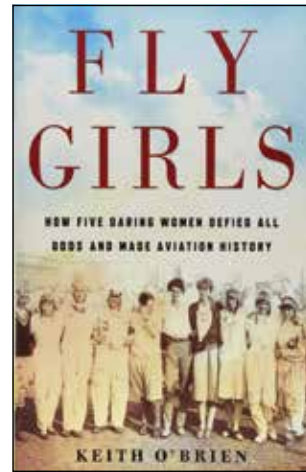
Also, historical fiction has a way of adding emotion to historical events that a non-fiction book might lack. I think when you can feel invested in certain characters it makes the history behind the story feel more real.

Fly Girls: How Five Daring Women Defied All Odds and Made Aviation History

Fly Girls tells the stories of five remarkable women who fought to break the glass ceiling in airplane racing. Amelia Earhart was the most famous, but not necessarily the most skilled. Together, they fought for the chance to race against the men and one of them would triumph in the toughest race of all.

Why it's on the TBR list — If you are looking for "women in aviation

history" in a non-fiction format this book is for you. I was mostly interested in this book because it promises the stories of not only Amelia Earhart — whom we have all heard of — but also four other female aviators. These women faced

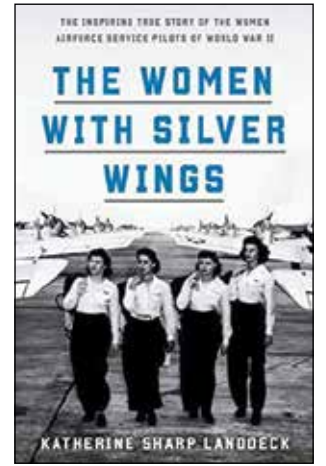


their own aviation and patriarchy challenges and were mostly overlooked. And I want to know more! Don't you?

The Women with Silver Wings: The Inspiring True Story of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II

Cornelia Fort was a flight instructor in Hawaii when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941. She became one of first responders to the call for women pilots to aid the war effort. The Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) gave women a chance to serve their country and prove that women aviators were just as skilled as men. However, with the tides of war turning, Congress clipped the women's wings. The bonds they forged were unbreakable, making them strong through the decades to fight for recognition as veterans, as well as their place in military history.

Why it's on the TBR list — As with the Six Tri-



Courtesy photos

ple Eight, there have been many stories of WASP veterans between the pages of *Aerotech News*. I wanted to get more of the story of how inspiring women fought for recognition as part of the Air Force and opened aviation for women and the Air Force today. It's a story that reminds you that even when something seems impossible, it's not when you are willing to fight for it.

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TRAILBLAZERS:

AETC honors first women pilots in Air Force

By Capt. Kenya Pettway

Air Education and Training Command Public Affairs

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas (AFNS) — In honor of the first women who became U.S. Air Force pilots, Air Education and Training Command officials renamed the Martin Hall Conference Room, the Trailblazer Room in 2020.

Located in the AETC headquarters, the newly renamed Trailblazer Room was dedicated to the first 10 women who earned their silver wings, Sept. 2, 1977.

“The women of class 77-08 truly broke barriers,” said Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, former

AETC commander. “They lived the fact that glass ceilings were a reality simply because they were women. These trailblazers paved the way for future generations of female pilots and their influence on our Air Force is still felt today.”

The 10 women of undergraduate pilot training class 77-08 who were honored are; Kathleen A. Cosand, Victoria K. Crawford, Mary E. Donahue, Connie J. Engel, Kathy LaSauce, Mary M. Livingston, Susan D. Rogers, Carol A. Scherer, Christine E. Schott and Sandra M. Scott.

In 1975, then-Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David C. Jones, announced the launch of a



U.S. Air Force photo by Sean M. Worrell

From left: Retired U.S. Air Force Col. Kathleen Cosand, Lt. Col. Sandra Scott, Lt. Col. Mary Livingston, and Lt. Col. Connie Engel, pose in front of a T-38 Talon prior to their flight with the 435th Flying Training Squadron June 29, 2020, at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas. These women are four of 10 who were the part of the first class to graduate Undergraduate Pilot Training in 1977.

test program that would enable women to enter pilot training and staff a now all-volunteer force after the abolishment of the military draft following the Vietnam War.

“This was the first time, nearly three decades after the birth of the Air Force, that women were allowed to join the service as equals to men and enter pilot and navigator career fields,” Webb said. “This dedication will serve as a reminder for all of us of the courage these female pioneers showed while shattering those glass ceilings.”

Sept. 26, 1976, these 10 women, alongside their 35 male classmates, began UPT at Williams Air Force Base, Arizona, and cemented their place in history.

Accumulating more than 210 flight hours in the T-37 Tweet and T-38 Talon, they successfully completed UPT and went on to achieve more historical feats in their Air Force

careers that pioneered future generations of women to follow.

Mary E. Donahue

Donahue became the first woman to serve as an instructor pilot assigned to the U.S. Air Force Academy, where she taught senior cadets to fly the T-41 trainer and was an educator in the department of mathematical science.

Susan D. Rogers

Flying a C-141 Starlifter, Rogers evacuated victims of a bombing attack on a U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon on Oct. 23, 1983. She died of cancer in 1992 and left behind a legacy of excellence.

Christine E. Schott

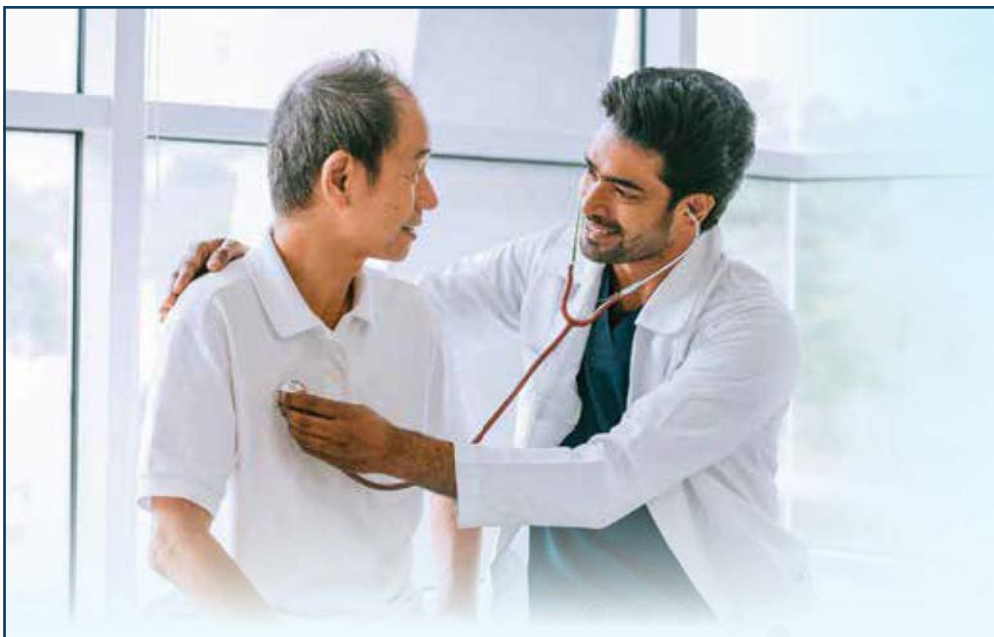
Schott was the first woman to solo in the Northrop T-38A Talon at Williams AFB, Arizona.

See AETC, Page 10



U.S. Air Force photo by Sean M. Worrell

Retired U.S. Air Force Col. Kathleen Cosand speaks about her experiences in Undergraduate Pilot Training during the Trailblazer Room dedication ceremony June 29, 2020. A graphic of the 10 women who made history hangs on the wall. Cosand was the first woman to be awarded the Air Medal for Contingency Operations in Zaire in May 1978.



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Five African-American women who made U.S. military history

by Trishawn Smith
and Bridgette Baldwin

Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio

There are many female pioneers in African American history with various accomplishments that come to mind. Some of these pioneers are Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks, Madam C.J. Walker and Shirley Chisholm.

Many black women also broke barriers while serving in the U.S. Military.

These women worked on the front lines or provided support to U.S. soldiers and civilian employees.

Command Sgt. Maj. Mildred C. Kelly

Mildred C. Kelly served in the U.S. Army from March 1947 to April 1976. The Army wasn't her first career choice. She attended and graduated from Knoxville College in Tennessee with a degree in chemistry. After graduation she briefly taught high school before deciding to join the Army.

In 1972 she became the first black female Sergeant Major in the U.S. Army. Two years later in 1974 she made ranks of the first black female Command Sergeant Major at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. This made her the first Black woman to hold the highest enlisted position at a major Army installation whose population was predominantly male.

After retirement she continued to serve in a different capacity by remaining active on various boards such as the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Maryland, Veterans Commission and the Veterans Advisory Board. Kelly passed away from cancer in 2003.



Army photograph

Sgt. Maj. Mildred C. Kelly becomes the first Black woman to earn her new rank as she is promoted by Brig. Gen. Jack T. Pink, director of enlisted personnel in Washington. Kelly's mother, Maxie D. Kelly, assisted in the ceremony.

decided to join the Army Reserve — Fort Bragg's 82nd Airborne Division in 1971.

In 1974, Staff Sgt. Joyce B. Malone became the first Black woman and the oldest to earn Airborne wings in the United States Army Reserve. By age 38, Malone completed 15 parachute jumps during her time in the Army Reserve.



Army photograph

Brig. Gen. Hazel W. Johnson-Brown, head of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, circa 1979.

Brig. Gen. Hazel W. Johnson-Brown

Becoming a nurse was Hazel W. Johnson-Brown's dream. She attended the Harlem School of Nursing. Her career began at the Harlem Hospital as an operating room nurse after completing her studies.

In 1955, seven years after President Truman eliminated segregation in the military, Johnson-Brown made the decision to enlist in the U.S. Army. She impressed her superiors with her incredible talent and taking multiple assignments across the world.

One of Johnson-Brown's assignments included Japan where she trained nurses on their way to Vietnam.

She made history after being promoted in 1979 to brigadier general. With that promotion she took charge of 7,000 nurses in the Army Nurse Corps making her the first Black female general officer to hold that post. When she received her promotion, she said "Race is an incidence of birth" and "I hope the criterion for selection did not include race but competence." Johnson-Brown served in the U.S. Army from 1955 to 1983, receiving multiple awards and decorations.



Air Force photograph

Maj. Gen. Marcelite J. Harris was the first woman aircraft maintenance officer, one of the first two women air officers commanding at the U.S. Air Force Academy, and the first woman deputy commander for maintenance. She also served as a White House social aide during the Carter administration.

Maj. Gen. Marcelite J. Harris

Harris was born in Houston, Texas on January 16, 1943. She graduated from Spelman College, earning her B.A. in speech and drama. She originally wanted to be an actress but her plans changed so she signed up for the Air Force.

In 1965 she completed Officer Training School at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, and held a variety of assignments in the Air Force.

Harris' career included many "firsts," including being the first female aircraft maintenance officer, one of the first two female air officers commanding at the United States Air Force Academy and the Air Force's first female Director of Maintenance. She also served as a White House social aide during the Carter administration.

Her service medals and decorations include the Bronze Star, the Presidential Unit Citation and the Vietnam Service Medal. Harris retired as a major general in 1997, the highest ranking female officer in the Air Force and the nation's highest ranking African American woman in the Department of Defense. She died in 2018.



Army photograph by C.J. Lovelace

Sgt. Danyell Wilson

Sgt. Danyell Wilson

Danyell Wilson served in the U.S. Army and became the first African American woman to earn the prestigious Tomb Guard Badge.

She became a sentinel at the Tomb of the Unknowns, Jan. 22, 1997. Born in 1974 in Montgomery, Alabama, Wilson joined the Army in February 1993. She was a military police officer assigned to the MP Company, 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard). She completed testing and a rigorous training period and became part of the Honor Guard Company of The Old Guard.

After receiving the silver emblem, Wilson said she was glad the training was over. "I figured it [finishing the training] was the highest honor," she said before making her first official "high-visibility" walk.

• *Editor's note: This article was originally published Feb. 4, 2021, as part of the 2021 Air Force Security Assistance & Cooperation Directorate Black History Month celebration.*



Army photograph

Staff Sgt. Joyce B. Malone was the first Black woman, and the oldest, to earn airborne wings in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Staff Sgt. Joyce B. Malone

Malone was originally a Fayetteville, North Carolina, civic leader who enlisted in the Marines in 1958 where she served four years.

Following her service in the Marine Corps in 1962, Malone got married and finished college at Fayetteville State University.

A few years went by and while working at Fort Bragg (now named Fort Liberty) she

SKY SOLDIER MAKES HISTORY AS FIRST ACTIVE-DUTY FEMALE ARMY SNIPER

by Maj. Joe Legros

Vicenza, Italy

A close friend told her there was no way she could do it. She would not make it in the Army, and there was even less chance of her becoming a sniper.

Four years later, she is still defying the odds.

“My nickname growing up was ‘Sniper,’” said U.S. Army Sgt. Maciel Hay, a cavalry scout with 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (1-91 CAV), 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Not only did she make it through basic training while qualifying as an expert with the M4 assault rifle, she quickly followed that up by graduating from airborne school. Now she is truly living up to her childhood nickname as the first active duty female U.S. Army sniper.

“I grew up shooting, mostly rifles and handguns, on my family’s ranches in Rocklin, California and Medford, Oregon,” said Hay. “But the nickname came from the fact that I could find things really fast, similar to how a

sniper does target detection.”

Hay says that shooting came naturally to her, but she credits her uncle Cy with teaching her the basics. However, the inspiration to become an Army sniper came later while attending Sierra College near her hometown.

“A close friend of mine told me I’d

never make it in the Army, and there’s no way I could become a sniper,” Hay laughed. “Needless to say, that person is no longer part of my life. But now that I look back at it, I really do appreciate the motivation.”

See SNIPER, Page 10



Courtesy photo

U.S. Army Sgt. Maciel Hay, a cavalry scout with 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, poses for a photo with her family after graduating sniper school at Fort Moore, Ga., Nov. 3, 2023. With this accomplishment, Hay becomes the first active duty female U.S. Army sniper.



Army photograph by Patrick Albright

U.S. Army Sgt. Maciel Hay, a cavalry scout with 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, poses for a photo after graduating sniper school at Fort Moore, Ga., Nov. 3, 2023. With this accomplishment, Hay becomes the first active duty female U.S. Army sniper.

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First Tomb Badge awarded to female infantry soldier

by Kevin M. Hymel

Arlington National Cemetery Historian

Army Pfc. Jessica Kwiatkowski made history on Sept. 18, 2023, when she became the first woman infantry soldier to earn the Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Identification Badge.

Other women have earned the badge, but they have come from other career fields. Tomb Guards who earn the badge also earn the distinction of being referred to as Sentinels.

Kwiatkowski stood at attention next to Spec. Gavin Glover, who also earned his badge, in the chapel of Arlington National Cemetery's Memorial Amphitheater as 1st Lt. Henry Newstrom, the commander of the Guard, congratulated them on becoming sentinels.

"You are now fully vested members of a small team that the nation trusts to do its most important ceremonial mission," he told a crowd of about 30 people.

To earn the badge, soldiers must complete five phases of testing and demonstrate a high degree of proficiency in general Army and Tomb Guard knowledge. They also must maintain the meticulous appearance of the uniforms worn by Tomb Guards while on duty; master the various guard changes and ceremonies conducted at the Tomb; and demonstrate verbal and written knowledge of over 12 different poems and 200 Arlington National Cemetery gravesites.

At the ceremony, Kwiatkowski's and Glover's fathers pinned the badges on the right breast pockets of their uniforms. Lt. Col. Peter Vangjel, the commander of the 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, known as "The Old Guard," explained the importance of the Tomb Guards.

"More people come to see the Tomb Guards, more people see them on television, more people walk through here every day than most other Army formations put

together," he said. "They have incredible influence."

Kwiatkowski, who gained the public's attention when a video of her guarding the Tomb during a severe thunderstorm went viral, remained humble about her pioneering achievement.

"I'm honestly just another Tomb Guard," she said. When asked about her life after going viral, she mentioned that Army leaders had given her a lot of support, explaining, "They tell me congratulations and keep doing the mission."

Glover appreciates the rarity of his badge. "Both my parents, who are retired Army officers, have never met somebody with one,"



LEFT: Army Pfc. Jessica Kwiatkowski, left, and Spec. Gavin Glover, center, earn the Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Identification Badge during a ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, Va., Sept. 18, 2023.



Army Pfc. Jessica Kwiatkowski and two other soldiers assigned to the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, known as "The Old Guard," keep watch at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va., Aug. 2, 2023.



Army photographs by Elizabeth Fraser

Army Pfc. Jessica Kwiatkowski, assigned to the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, known as "The Old Guard," walks the mat at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va., Aug. 2, 2023.

he explained. The hardest part of earning his badge, he said, was the upkeep of his various uniforms.

Both the new sentinels' parents were proud of their achievement. Kwiatkowski's mother, Lynne, brought tissues for the emotional event. "When she does something, she does it 110 percent," she said. "That's always been her since she came into this world." When

asked about his daughter guarding the Tomb in the storm, Kwiatkowski's father, Jason, explained, "That's just how she is; she's always tried to attack the hardest thing possible."

Glover's father Jim, a retired Army major, beamed with pride at his son's achievement. "It's been amazing watching his progress through the testing process and reaching these standards," he said. "I know

it's going to serve him well in the Army."

Among the crowd of soldiers and Arlington National Cemetery employees was an older gentleman. Joey Spangler had been a Tomb Guard almost 45 years ago and came to the ceremony to see history. "It's a proud moment," he said. "Nothing compares to serving the Unknowns. It's something you'll keep with you for your whole life."

ARTEMIS

(from Page 3)

The crew assignments are as follows: Commander Reid Wiseman, Pilot Victor Glover, Mission Specialist 1 Christina Hammock Koch, and Mission Specialist 2 Jeremy Hansen. They will work as a team to execute an ambitious set of demonstrations during the flight test.

The approximately 10-day Artemis II flight test will launch on the agency's powerful Space Launch System rocket, prove the Orion spacecraft's life-support systems, and validate the capabilities and techniques needed for humans to live and work in deep space.

"We are going back to the Moon and Canada is at the center of this exciting journey," said the Honorable François-Philippe Champagne, the minister responsible for the Canadian Space Agency. "Thanks to our longstanding collaboration with NASA, a Canadian astronaut will fly on this historic mission. On behalf of all Canadians, I want to congratulate Jeremy for being at the forefront of one of the most ambitious human endeavors ever undertaken. Canada's participation in the Artemis program is not only a defining chapter of our history in space, but also a testament to the friendship and close partnership between our two nations."

The flight, set to build upon the successful uncrewed Artemis I mission completed in December, will set the stage for the first woman and first person of color on the Moon through the Artemis program, paving the way for

future for long-term human exploration missions to the Moon, and eventually Mars. This is the agency's Moon to Mars exploration approach.

Meet Artemis II Astronauts

This will be Wiseman's second trip into space, serving previously as a flight engineer aboard the International Station for Expedition 41 from May through November 2014. Wiseman has logged more than 165 days in space, including almost 13 hours as lead spacewalker during two trips outside the orbital complex. Prior to his assignment, Wiseman served as chief of the Astronaut Office from December 2020 until November 2022.

The mission will be Glover's second spaceflight, serving previously as pilot on NASA's SpaceX Crew-1, which landed May 2, 2021, after 168 days in space. As a flight engineer aboard the space station for Expedition 64, he contributed to scientific investigations, technology demonstrations, and participated in four spacewalks.

Koch also will be making her second flight into space on the Artemis II mission. She served as flight engineer aboard the space station for Expedition 59, 60, and 61. Koch set a record for the longest single spaceflight by a woman with a total of 328 days in space and participated in the first all-female spacewalks.

Representing Canada, Hansen is making his first flight to space. A colonel in the Canadian Armed Forces and former fighter pilot, Hansen holds a Bachelor of Science in space science from Royal Military College of

Canada in Kingston, Ontario, and a Master of Science in physics from the same institution in 2000, with a research focus on Wide Field of View Satellite Tracking. He was one of two recruits selected by CSA in May 2009 through the third Canadian Astronaut Recruitment Campaign and has served as Capcom in NASA's Mission Control Center at Johnson and, in 2017, became the first Canadian to be entrusted with leading a NASA astronaut class, leading the training of astronaut candidates from the United States and Canada.

"I could not be prouder that these brave four will kickstart our journeys to the Moon and beyond," said Director of Flight Operations Norm Knight, NASA Johnson. "They represent exactly what an astronaut corps should be: a mix of highly capable and accomplished individuals with the skills and determination to take on any trial as a team. The Artemis II mission will be challenging, and we'll test our limits as we prepare to put future astronauts on the Moon. With Reid, Victor, Christina, and Jeremy at the controls, I have no doubt we're ready to face every challenge that comes our way."

Through Artemis missions, NASA will use innovative technologies to explore more of the lunar surface than ever before. We will collaborate with commercial and international partners and establish the first long-term presence on the Moon. Then, we will use what we learn on and around the Moon to take the next giant leap: sending the first astronauts to Mars.

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AETC (from Page 5)

She later became the first woman to qualify and serve as an aircraft commander on the C-9A Nightingale medical transport and command its first all-female aircrew.

Connie J. Engel

Engel, the class leader, was the first in her class to solo in the T-37 Nov. 30, 1976, earning her one of the three Distinguished Graduate awards, the Officer Training Award for exhibiting "high qualities of military bearing and leadership" and the Air Training Commander's Trophy as top graduate.

Following graduation, she became the first female T-38 instructor and flew the T-38 chase for the space shuttle program.

Kathy LaSauce

LaSauce became the first female pilot to command a C-141 and the first woman to serve as a presidential support pilot.

She joined the Air Force in 1972 and received one of only two slots available for women to attend Air Force Officer Training School. After graduating OTS, LaSauce was selected as one of the first female officers in aircraft maintenance, a newly opened career field for women at that time. Her experience in aircraft maintenance helped her gain one of the

10 slots for women to enter pilot training. "I loved aircraft maintenance," LaSauce said. "I loved working around airplanes. When pilot training opened for women, I knew that was what I wanted to do."

Although LaSauce's interest in becoming a pilot was not met with optimism by society, she did so anyway.

"I wanted to play the trumpet and they said 'no, girls don't play the trumpet,' so I played the trumpet," she said. "I wanted to be a drum major and they said 'no, girls aren't drum majors' so I became a drum major. When I set my heart on doing something, I didn't listen to those who told me I couldn't."

Sandra M. Scott

Scott became the first female tanker commander to perform alert duty for the Strategic Air Command.

She joined Air Force ROTC at Oregon State University in 1970 after school officials had opened the program to women only a year prior. Following her commissioning in 1973, she was stationed at Tyn dall Air Force Base, Florida, for weapons controller training where she was first exposed to aviation.

After completing her first assignment, she went to King Salmon Air Force Station, Alaska, where she met pilots who were conducting alert missions. When the

Air Force announced its test program, she applied and was accepted.

"My parents infused in me the idea that it wasn't about me being a woman," Scott said. "It was that I had abilities and that I could use those abilities to accomplish anything."

In spite of the women's accomplishments during pilot training, they faced disparaging public opinion.

Some male flight instructors opposed the test program and didn't believe women should fly; a position they expressed openly during training.

LaSauce recalled a time when an instructor told Livingston, "I don't know why I'm teaching you how to fly the T-38 because you'll never be a fighter pilot." LaSauce said her flight commander shared the same sentiment, stating that if he had his way, none of the women would graduate.

In the face of these unique challenges, they knew that the future of women in aviation rested on their success.

"Women would not be flying combat missions, flying fighters or commanding flying squadrons if we didn't succeed," LaSauce said. "We knew in our hearts we needed to do well."

Although it was another 30 years before women were allowed to fly in combat mis-

sions, the 10 trailblazers forged a path for the women who followed.

"About a year later, female astronauts began training at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma," said Gary Boyd, AETC command historian. "The success of the group ushered in the modern era of military aviation."

Decades later, the stories and the historical feats of each of the women from UPT classes 77-08 were honored.

"It warms my heart that Air Education and Training Command decided to tell our story," Scott said. "It's the story of women who broke barriers."

As of March 31, 2023, women make up 21.4 % of all Air Force members. Of the 325,605 active duty members, 69,728 are women, with 1,035 who serve as pilots, 453 navigators and 291 air battle managers, according to Air Force's Personnel Center website.

That makes female pilots roughly eight percent of the 12, 243 pilots, female navigators 14% of 3,280 overall, and female battle managers 21% of 1,363.

"There is no denying the trailblazing women of class 77-08 were set up in such a way that failure would have been easy," Webb said. "But that's not what Airmen do. Through grit and determination not only did they succeed, they excelled."

SNIPER (from Page 7)

In contrast, Hay points to her positive experience in the Army, underscored by the support she has received from leaders and peers throughout her training. From the early days of basic training, where her sharpshooting skills caught the attention of leadership, to her drill sergeant encouraging her to pursue sniper school, Hay found herself surrounded by individuals who recognized her potential.

"Even though I only shot sharpshooter at first, then eventually expert later on in basic training, my drill sergeant encouraged me to pursue the goal of sniper school," said Hay.

In the world of military marksmanship, individual weapons qualification is a crucial milestone. With their M4 or M16 assault rifle, Soldiers must shoot at least 23 out of 40 targets to earn the status of "marksman." Achieving sharpshooter status requires hitting at least 30 targets, whereas experts must shoot a minimum of 36. Hay's progression from sharpshooter to expert reflects not just her skill but also her dedication to mastering the art of marksmanship.

After basic and advanced individual training as a cavalry scout, Hay's leadership at the 1-91 CAV continued to see her potential.

"Sergeant Hay is just an incredible non-commissioned officer that comes to work every day with the intention of making not only her team better, but also the entire organization," said Hay's platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Antwon Jones, 1-91 CAV.

As Jones alludes, Hay's journey to sniper school took a team effort.

Jones shared that from slotting her into a sniper section to ensuring she was prepared ahead of time, multiple leaders supported Hay's decision to pursue sniper school.

"One example that comes to mind is our new Behavioral Health Provider, Captain Lee," said Jones. "He wasn't even in-processed with the unit at that point, but he made time on a Saturday to meet with Sgt. Hay for a screening needed for her submission packet."

Soldiers attending sniper school undergo a rigorous selection process. Typically, candidates are experienced infantrymen who have demonstrated exceptional marksmanship skills. They must meet specific physical and mental requirements, as the demanding nature of sniper operations requires a high level of fitness, discipline and concentration.

In preparing for sniper school, Hay was tasked with making a ghillie suit, which is a type of camouflage cloth-



Courtesy photo

U.S. Army Sgt. Maciel Hay, a cavalry scout with 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, poses for a photo after graduating sniper school at Fort Moore, Ga., Nov. 3, 2023. With this accomplishment, Hay becomes the first active duty female U.S. Army sniper.

ing typically worn by snipers. Even this endeavor was a group effort.

"It took many hours, multiple people and tons of sewing to create an acceptable ghillie suit," said Hay.

Once at school, the ghillie suit came in handy, as marksmanship was not the only focal point for sniper candidates during the five-week course.

While emphasis is placed on developing exceptional marksmanship skills with various sniper rifles, including bolt-action and semi-automatic systems, sniper candidates are tested in the art of stalking and concealment, observation and intelligence gathering, survival skills and land navigation, as well as urban sniper operations where snipers perform their craft in densely populated areas.

"The rapid target engagement and intelligence reporting were two of the toughest areas for me," said Hay. "I also struggled with the very last test where we had to engage

long distance targets while sitting on our rucksacks. That position threw off my balance."

Hay shared that the instructors were very passionate about their craft and provided many hours of assistance to her class of sniper candidates, including guidance on the rucksack position.

"They told me to tighten my tripod's sling, fitting it closer to my body," said Hay. "That made all the difference."

Upon successful completion of the training, Hay and the other graduates received certification as U.S. Army Snipers. This qualification signifies that the soldier has met the high standards set by the school and is capable of carrying out sniper duties in a variety of operational environments.

Hay's family was able to travel from California to visit her at Fort Moore (formerly Fort Benning), Georgia, for the sniper school graduation. It was the first time they were able to see her in uniform.

"Due to COVID travel restrictions, they weren't able to make it to my basic training or advanced individual training a few years ago," said Hay. "Then, I went straight to Germany to join my unit. So it was really nice to see them and I'm grateful for their support."

From her childhood day's nicknamed "Sniper," to graduating as the first female active duty Army sniper, Hay's full-circle journey is one of commitment and determination, and she is not done yet.

Her next assignment takes her to Anchorage, Alaska, with the 1st Squadron (Airborne), 40th Cavalry Regiment. She says becoming a jumpmaster is her next goal, and everyone keeps telling her to attend Ranger School.

"It great to hear stories about paratroopers doing great things," said Jones, "But especially when it's a female defying the odds and proving women are just as capable to do anything when they have the motivation and drive to win."

About 173rd Airborne Brigade

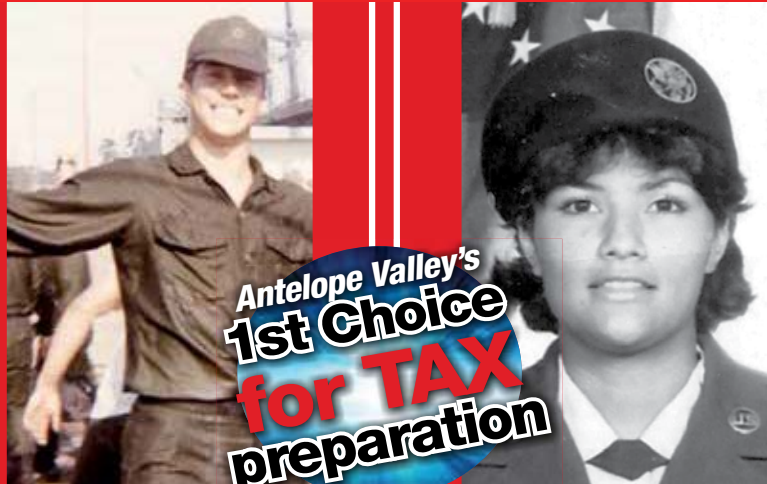
The 173rd Airborne Brigade is the U.S. Army's Contingency Response Force in Europe, providing rapidly deployable forces to the U.S. European Command, U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Central Command areas of responsibility. Forward deployed across Italy and Germany, the brigade routinely trains alongside NATO allies and partners to build partnerships and strengthen the alliance.

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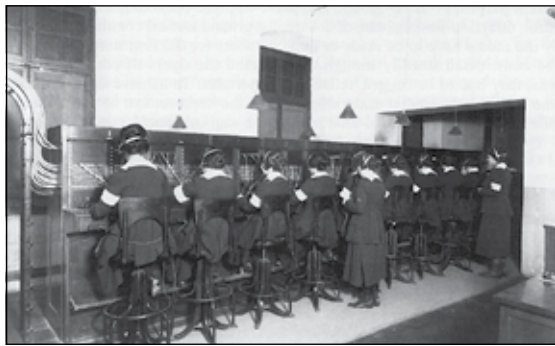
U.S. Army photograph

Nurses during the American Civil War.



Library of Congress photograph

Nurses and wounded doughboys are shown at a field hospital in France, 1918.



U.S. Army Signal Corps photograph by Sgt. Abbott

Female U.S. Signal Corps Telephone Operators in Chaumont, France, during World War I.



National Archives photograph

Members of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion take part in a parade ceremony in honor of Joan d'Arc at the marketplace where she was burned at the stake.



Navy photograph

Capt. Mildred H. McAfee, director of the WAVES, listens as Storekeeper 2nd Class Dorothy Oates explains her duties in handling salvage materials at Naval Air Station Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on 4 July 1945. McAfee was on an inspection tour. Storekeepers were responsible for distributing supplies to the fleet

OVER 200 YEARS

The history of women

By Danielle DeSimone

From the battlefields of the American Revolution to the deserts of Kuwait, women have been serving in the military in one form or another for more than 200 years. They have had to overcome decades of obstacles to get to where they are today: serving in greater numbers, in combat roles and in leadership positions all around the world.

Here is a look at the history of women in the military, how their roles have changed over the years and how the USO has supported them since our founding as an organization in 1941.

Revolutionary War

Although women were not always permitted to enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces, many still found ways to serve their nation.

During the Revolutionary War, as colonial militias armed themselves and joined George Washington's Continental Army, many of these soldiers' wives, sisters, daughters and mothers went with them. These women traveled alongside the Continental Army, where they boosted morale as well as mended clothes, tended to wounds, foraged for food, cooked and cleaned both laundry and cannons.

Some women found ways to join the fight for independence. Margaret Corbin, for example, disguised herself as a man and traveled with her husband to the front lines of the Battle of Fort Mifflin, where she helped him load his cannon. When her husband was shot by enemy fire, Corbin carried on fighting, even after being shot three times.

She was given a military pension in acknowledgment of her efforts, and years after her death was reburied at West Point with full military honors. Similarly, Deborah Sampson fought disguised as a man for years before her true sex was revealed. Other women, such as Lydia Darragh, also supported the war effort by spying on behalf of the Patriots.

However, women's roles in the military became even more crucial during the Civil War, as their support expanded.

Civil War

During the Civil War, nearly 20,000 women lent their skills and efforts in everything from growing crops to feed Union troops to cooking in Army camps. Other tasks included sewing, laundering uniforms and blankets and organizing donations through door-to-door fundraising campaigns.

Notably, it was during the Civil War that women began to serve as nurses on a much larger and more official scale. Approximately 3,000 women served as nurses for the Union Army during the war. Legendary nurse and founder of the Red Cross Clara Barton even received a special "military pass" that permitted her to travel directly onto the battlefield, where she drove her medical wagons straight into the fray to tend to wounded soldiers. Fellow trailblazer Dorothea Dix was even appointed superintendent of the United States Army Nurses for the Union Army, leading her own "army of nurses" over the course of the war.

Meanwhile, some women even marched on the battlefields. Historians estimate that about 1,000 women disguised themselves as men and fought on both sides of the Civil War.

World War I

The 20th century changed everything for women in the military.

At the onset of the United States' entry into World War I in April 1917, the U.S. Army Nurse Corps (ANC) — formally established in 1901 — had only officially been in existence for less than 20 years, and only had 403 nurses in its active-duty ranks. By June 1918, just over a year later, there were more than 3,000 American nurses deployed to British-operated hospitals in France. These nurses often worked in dangerous conditions

near the front lines, caring for service members and civilians alike, and ensuring the health and safety of Allied troops.

However, World War I is also notable because it was the first time women — who did not yet have the right to vote — were allowed to openly serve in the U.S. military.

With large numbers of American men being sent to war overseas, the Armed Forces — and the U.S. Navy in particular — needed stateside replacements for the roles that were left behind. After finding a loophole in a naval act that would allow women to serve in non-commissioned officer and non-combat roles, the Navy enlisted its first "yeomanettes." Around 12,000 women served in the rank of yeoman, mostly working clerical duties, as well as telephone and radio operators and translators.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Army Signal Corps enlisted women to work as telephone and switchboard operators. These women — nicknamed the "Hello Girls" — often worked very close to the front lines in France. They would not be recognized for their high-pressure work or their status as veterans until decades later, in 1979.

Then, only a few years after the War to End All Wars, World War II broke out and women's roles continued to evolve with the rest of society.

World War II

World War II created an unprecedented need for service members. As more than 16 million Americans stepped up to serve on the front lines — the majority of those being men — the U.S. military was left with many non-combat roles that needed to be filled. So, the women of the United States stepped up too, and for the first time in history, all branches of the military enlisted women in their ranks.

- **Army:** The Army formed the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACs), which was later renamed and restructured to form the active duty Women's Army Corps (WACS). The branch also formed the Army's Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs).

- **Navy:** The Navy formed the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES).

- **Marine Corps:** The Marines enlisted women in the Marine Corps Women's Reserve.

- **Coast Guard:** The Coast Guard formed the Women's Reserve (SPARS), which stood for the Coast Guard motto, Semper Paratus — "Always Ready."

In total, nearly 350,000 American women served in uniform during World War II.

These women took on non-combat roles in order to free up more men to fight. They continued to work clerical jobs as they did during World War I, but they also drove vehicles, repaired airplanes, worked in laboratories and cryptology, served as radio and telephone operators, rigged parachutes, test-flew planes and even trained their male counterparts in air combat tactics.

Women also served as nurses. 57,000 served in the Army Nurse Corps and 11,000 in the Navy Nurse Corps — and these roles were not without risk. Many of these women worked right on the front lines and came under enemy fire, and some even won combat decorations. Army Col. Ruby Bradley, a nurse in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, was kept prisoner at an internment camp in the Philippines for 37 months, during which she remained steadfast in her calling as a nurse.

She performed 230 major surgeries and delivered 13 babies during her time as a prisoner of war (POW), even under harsh conditions. In total, 432 women were killed in the line of service during World War II and 88 were taken as POWs.

True to societal norms at the time, all branches emphasized the expectation of femininity within the ranks of women in the military throughout the war. Uniforms included skirts, not slacks, and nail polish, makeup and feminine hairstyles

HERS OF SERVICE: Women in the U.S. military

were not only allowed, but encouraged. But beyond this focus on femininity, these women were finally recognized as vital, enlisted members of the Armed Forces.

They risked their lives and were integral to American success in the war, and through it all, they faced challenges in navigating their new roles and overcoming discrimination in a male-dominated arena. After the war, many of these women would return home, hoping to continue their military career, only to find themselves pushed out of their roles so that the men returning from war could have them. Some women would struggle for decades to obtain veteran status or benefits for their service during World War II.

But because of their perseverance and dedication to service throughout the war, they helped pave the way for women in the military who would come after them.

Korean War

In 1948, three years after the end of World War II, President Harry S. Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act into law, officially allowing women to serve as full, permanent members of all branches of the Armed Forces.

However, this was not a guarantee of equal opportunity. The act actually restricted the number of women who could serve to only 2% of each branch, and also limited how many women could become officers. Additionally, female service members could be automatically discharged if they became pregnant, and they were unable to command men or serve in combat positions.

But regardless of the obstacles that remained in female service members' paths, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was still a step toward progress for women in the military. One month after the act's passing, President Truman issued the Integration of the Armed Forces executive order, desegregating the military and ensuring that Black women could now serve equally in all branches of the military as well.

And serve they did. Just two years later, the Korean War broke out, and 120,000 women would go on to serve in active duty positions from 1950-1953. Although they could not serve in combat, they undertook new roles such as military police officers or engineers.

Military nurses would also continue to play a critical role during this time. Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals (MASH) were heavily used during the Korean War, providing fully functioning hospitals in combat zones, where many nurses worked.

Just a few years later in the Vietnam War, these nurses would be called to the front lines once again.

Vietnam War

Approximately 11,000 women were stationed in Vietnam during the nearly 20-year war, and 90% of them were nurses in the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Notably, most volunteered to go.

During the Vietnam War, other female service members worked as air traffic controllers, intelligence officers and clerks — both at home and in Vietnam. In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson opened promotions for women to general and flag ranks and in 1972, women were allowed to command units that included men.

The U.S.' involvement in the Vietnam War came to a close in 1973 and two years later, the Pentagon announced that pregnant women could remain in the military.

The 80s, 90s and Today

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, there were a lot of "firsts" for women in the military: the first woman to become a Navy fighter pilot; the first female four-star general in the Army; and the first female rescue swimmer in the Coast Guard, among others.

There was even the first Silver Star awarded to a female soldier since World War II. Army Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester was awarded the

military medal in recognition of her brave actions during an enemy ambush on her supply convoy in Iraq in 2005. She is also the first woman to ever receive the Silver Star for direct combat action.

But it was not just the "firsts" that were impressive in these more recent years.

As more women broke through barriers and established themselves as capable service members working in defense of the nation, the list of "firsts" slowly became less noteworthy in comparison to the sheer number of women serving, as well as their significant contributions to their respective branches.

In the Gulf War, from just 1990-1991, more than 40,000 women deployed to combat zones, although they still could not technically serve in direct combat roles or assignments.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton rescinded the "Risk Rule," essentially allowing women to serve in all positions in the military except for direct ground combat roles. This allowed for many more women to still engage in combat as aviators, sailors, Air Force personnel and other roles.

Then, in 2013, then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced that the ban on women in combat would be lifted entirely, and that female service members would be allowed to serve in direct ground combat roles. In 2015, this was put into action. This historic change opened up hundreds of thousands of jobs for women in the military and essentially ensured that as long as female service members completed the necessary training and requirements, they could now serve in almost any role in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Women continue to make history in the military today, pushing boundaries and taking on more roles — and more prestigious roles — than ever before. More than 300,000 women have served in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11, more than 9,000 have earned Combat Action Badges and today, women make up 16% of our nation's Armed Forces, serving in every branch of the U.S. military.

USO Support of Women in the Military

The USO has supported women in the military since our organization was first founded in 1941 and women first began serving in the Armed Forces.

The first USO centers of World War II initially included separate, private rooms within the centers for female service members only, so that the WACs, WAVES and SPARs (as they were referred to in their respective branches) could have a place of respite all to themselves. Eventually, the USO opened USO Service Women's Clubs, which were built entirely for female service members and included special programming for women.

Following the end of World War II, the U.S. military — and the USO — was forever changed. Women were now a crucial part of the nation's Armed Forces, which meant that they were also a core part of the military community that the USO supports.

In the decades since, women have fought for the right to serve while pregnant, hold pilot roles, lead majority-male units, fight in combat and much, much more. Today, women serve in more roles — and in more prestigious roles — than ever before, and the USO is there at every step of their service journey.

From being there as a place to rest at the airport before they fly to basic training; to handing them a USO Care Package filled with female-specific hygiene items when they deploy overseas; to hosting a women's-only event on the front lines of the Middle East; to inviting them to a USO Special Delivery baby shower when they are far from their support networks; to offering them a way to connect with their kids back home through the USO Reading Program; to helping them discover their next step as they leave the military with the USO Pathfinder® Transition Program, women in the military can always turn to the USO.

Editor's note: This story was originally published on USO.org in 2021. It has been updated in 2023.



Army photograph
Lt. Helen Maystrovich treats a soldier wounded in Korea at the Tokyo Army Hospital Jan 12, 1951.



Air Force photograph
An Air Force flight nurses provides care to an injured serviceman during the Vietnam War.



Navy photograph by PO2 Tomas Mine
Women pilots of Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 34 (VAQ-34), Left to Right: Lt. Sue Hart, Lt. Brenda Scheufele, Lt. Pamela (Pam) Lyons Carel, pose for a photograph in front of an F/A-18A Hornet aircraft.



Air Force photograph
Retired Col. Nicole Malachowski says she knew she wanted to be a pilot at age five when she went to her first air show. Twenty-six years later, she became the first female USAF Thunderbirds pilot.

Women in test history

By Jeannine M. Geiger

Air Force Test Center History Office

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — In today's uncertain times, it is even more important to celebrate all aspects of human history. Women's history month plays an important part in the highlighting achievements that may have been buried throughout history. The United States has entered its second century of promoting the advancement and achievements of women, making this time period perhaps more important than others.

Just as they have in other fields, women pioneers have played a major role in the aerospace field, particularly at Edwards Air Force Base, California. While women have always supported and participated in military campaigns, either in support roles or, more rarely, in combat, American women participated in the Army Air Corps, the United States Air Force today, and recorded significant achievements during the lead-up to World War II. The

first women stationed at Edwards arrived at the Muroc Bombing and Gunnery range in 1944 as part of the Women's Army Corps. Women



Air Force photograph

The National Aeronautical and Space Administration selected Maj. Eileen Collins, a graduate of U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School Class 89B, as a Space Shuttle pilot candidate in 1990. Collins was the first woman selected for this program.

would not arrive at Edwards in official test roles until the mid-1970s. These early female Testers laid the foundation for their successors, who continue to make history today.

In 1944, Ann Gilpin Baumgartner, as Women's Air Service Pilot assigned to the Flight Test Division, flew a YP-59A, becoming the first woman to fly a jet aircraft.

In 1953, Jacqueline Cochran made two supersonic dives in a Canadian-built F-86 Sabre becoming the first woman to exceed the speed of sound. Later the same day, she flew the same plane over Edwards Air Force Base low-level course setting a new speed record 652.337 miles per hour. A chase plane piloted by then Maj. Charles Yeager accompanied her and she received one of her five Harmon Aviator Trophies for the effort (Yeager won the Aviator trophy that year). At her death in 1980, Cochran held more speed, distance, and altitude records than any other pilot, which remains true today.

See TEST, Page 20



Air Force photograph

Jacqueline Cochran standing on the wing of an F-86. In 1953, Jacqueline Cochran made two supersonic dives in a Canadian-built F-86 Sabre becoming the first woman to exceed the speed of sound. At her death in 1980, Cochran held more speed, distance, and altitude records than any other pilot, which remains true today.

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Remembering women in aviation – Past and present

By Cathy Hansen

Special to Aerotech News

The Antelope Valley, or “Aerospace Valley,” in Southern California has been blessed to have many women who have contributed their talents and enthusiasm to aviation and aerospace.

On May 16, 2003, an event was held to honor Jackie Cochran at Edwards Air Force Base.

Jacqueline Cochran Odum (1906-1980) broke the sound barrier at Edwards AFB, California, on May 18, 1953, in a Canadair F-86, becoming the first woman to boom through the invisible boundary, accompanied by the famous test pilot, Chuck Yeager as her chase pilot.

To commemorate the event, May 16, 2003 was proclaimed “Jackie Cochran Day” at Edwards AFB and a plaque was dedicated to Jackie Cochran and her history-making flight. In front of the plaque mounted on a pedestal next to an F-104 Starfighter (the type of aircraft used by Cochran for her later Mach 2 flights).

Maj. Gen. Wilbert D. “Doug” Pearson introduced Brig. Gen. (Retired) Charles E. “Chuck” Yeager, who spoke to a crowd of several busloads of invited guests, including: members of the Women Air Service Pilots (WASP), Ninety-Nines from several chapters; women astronauts and Air Force pilots; professional aviators; test pilots and community dignitaries.

After the formal unveiling of the plaque, Al Hansen flew his Canadair FMk-VI F-86 over to Edwards AFB from Mojave Airport in a salute to Jackie’s history-making flight in the same model.

What fun it was to watch Gen. Yeager with our good friends from Lancaster, Flora Belle Reece, and Irma “Babe” Story. They were members of the WASP in World War II and as the three of them were talking, the years just floated away and they were young again, reminiscing and laughing about how they enjoyed flying and serving America so many years ago.

Sadly, all of them are gone from this Earth, but their stories and memories live on in the hearts of us who loved them.

Marta Bohn-Meyer — an amazing woman in aviation

Marta Boyn-Meyer was a featured speaker at a special luncheon, along with Chuck Yeager.

Marta had the distinction of being the first female crewmember of NASA or the Air Force (and one of only two women) to fly in the triple-sonic SR-71.

In an article about the 50th celebration for Cochran, by Master Sgt. Anne Ward, a quote was cited by Bohn-Meyer: “Besides being a true American patriot, she was a world-record setter and a lady of great integrity,” said Marta Bohn-Myer, NASA engineer and SR-71 crewmember. “Truthfully, I’m jealous of Jackie Cochran— she achieved so much. She knew how to network and what teamwork was all about. She was an aviator’s aviator and also a woman’s aviator.”

Marta married Bob Meyer in 1979 and they were so blessed to share their deep



Air Force photograph

Chuck Yeager poses with Jackie Cochran next to a Canadair F-86, at Edwards AFB, Calif. Cochran became the first woman to break the sound barrier on May 18, 1953.

passion in working together on airplanes and flying them for over 26 years. Marta was born and raised on Long Island, New York, and attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and graduated with a degree in Aerospace Engineering.

She was an FAA-Certified Flight Instructor with over 6,000 flight hours and also held an FAA Inspector Authorization (aircraft mechanic inspector) license.

Marta was a member of the International Aerobatic Club, and was a USA Unlimited Team member for two years and the Team Manager this year in Spain where she was awarded the “Most Valuable Volunteer” award. She had related to aerial aerobatics for over 20 years.

Often, I would ask Marta to speak at Navy League or Tehachapi Republican Women or participate in some activity



NASA photograph

Marta Bohn-Meyer in front of the SR-71. She was the first female crewmember of NASA or the Air Force (and one of only two women) to fly in the triple-sonic SR-71.)

to promote aviation to young people. She always said “yes,” and I was so pleased and honored to call her a friend. The first time I met Marta, I was so impressed that she was actually shorter than I was, but she never let her height stand in her way. From what I understand, she let no obstacle stand in her way!

See **WOMEN**, Page 18

The women of the WASP

By Cathy Hansen

When the men went off to war, and the citizens of America learned to ration gas and food, and to save grease, rubber and aluminum, women were called upon to help in the war effort.

“Rosie the Riveter” built airplanes, trucks and tanks for our military troops and many housewives contributed by working at the Red Cross and tending to Victory Gardens.

In July 1941, Jacqueline Cochran presented a very special idea to the Secretary of War for using woman pilots to ferry aircraft from factories to air bases. She maintained that women were ferrying aircraft for the Royal Air Force in Britain, and flying combat missions in Russia.

She was met with many obstacles and General H. H. “Hap” Arnold told her that the Air Corps was not ready for or needful of women pilots, but she could recruit American women pilots to fill a request of the British Air Transport Auxiliary.

Cochran delivered 25 women pilots with 300-hours flying time who gladly signed a contract for 18-months of flying duty in England.

After some conflict, General Arnold accepted her training plan and agreed there truly was a need for more ferry pilots.

In July 1943, after Cochran’s training program proved itself, all women pilots were consolidated in the Army Air Forces, as the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP).

Over 25,000 young women signed up for the WASP program, but few of them made the cut. Of the 1,800 women selected, only 1,078 graduated to become pioneers, heroes, and role models. They were the first women to ever fly American military aircraft.

These women paved the way for our women aviators in



U.S. Army Air Force photograph

Eight WASP pilots in front of a North American AT-6 Texan 3 days before the WASPs were disbanded, Waco Army Airfield, Texas, United States, Nov 27, 1944.

the U.S. military today. Throughout the war, WASP flew over 60-million-miles in 77 different aircraft, ranging from trainers to B-29 bombers. These women had the same spirit of flight then that fills the souls of the men and women who fly today; the same spirit that binds all of us in the thrill of aviation.

In 1942, Eleanor Roosevelt said, “This is not a time when women should be patient. We are in a war, and we need to fight it with all our ability and every weapon possible. Women pilots, in this particular case, are a weapon waiting to be used.”

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PHOTO BY VIRGINIA TRUDEAU FEATURING JAIME DEROCKER

WOMEN

(from Page 16)

Marta had a special place in her heart for our country's Veterans and would go out of her way to speak to them. She was a wonderful motivational speaker and spoke twice to the Bakersfield Council Navy League about her experiences flying as flight engineer in the back seat of the B-Model SR-71 Blackbird.

Telling a group of young women about her interests as a child, Marta stated in a very matter of fact way, "When I was fourteen, my mother and father decided I needed a hobby. I was interested in horses and airplanes. The choice was easy for my father, who worked for Grumman as a flight test engineer. I started flying powered planes and soloed when I was sixteen, which was the minimum age. I've been working around airplanes ever since."

She continued, "I grew up in a family that was quite progressive, even by today's standards. My parents had five children: three girls and two boys. But they did not treat the girls any differently than the boys. I had absolutely no fear doing what the boys did."

She concluded with, "You make your opportunities into whatever they are. I was lucky to be in the right place at the right time, with the right education and qualifications and the right enthusiasm and attitude."

This most enthusiastic young woman tragically died in a plane crash in Oklahoma on September 18, 2005, during an aerobatic competition.

Marta was an inspiration to all women and particularly to women in aviation and was well known for her outstanding achievements in helping introduce young people to engineering sciences and aviation.

years ago. I still cherish the photos I have from that day. She was 80, I think, and as soon as Dave shut the engine down, she was jumping up onto the wing to climb in! Fantastic energy and enthusiasm!

She flew various trainers, including AT-6's and towed targets with Martin B-26's. Her dream plane was the Lockheed P-38 Lightning. She would shine Major Bong's P-38 for him, spending as much time as possible polishing the silver beauty. One time she got to sit in it and have a picture taken. That photo is still one of her prized possessions and in 2002 she not only sat in a P-38 at Mojave, but Bruce Lockwood showed her how to start the powerful engines.

Thank you, Flora Belle for your wonderful friendship and passion for flying!



Courtesy photo

Irma "Babe" Story in her WW II WASP days.

Irma "Babe" Story - WASP

Babe was a student of Pancho Barnes in her Civilian Pilot Training class in 1941.

She served in WASP Class: 43-W-6. Her Base Assignment was Dodge City Army Air Base, Harlingen Army Air Field.

She was manager and flight instructor at Lancaster Airport, which was located on Avenue I, near 10th Street West.

She participated in activities with the Antelope Valley 99s, including the Annual Poker Run

We are so fortunate to have known Irma "Babe" Story, Flora Belle Reece, and Margarite "Ty" Killen, all residents of Lancaster, California. They served in the



Photo by Cathy Hansen

Flora Belle Reece on P-38 F- lora Belle standing on a Lockheed P-38 Lightning, which she considered her "dream plane."



Photo by Cathy Hansen

Sentimental Journey — In 2009, the WWII-era B-17 Flying Fortress bomber "Sentimental Journey" visited Mojave Airport and gave WWII Veterans a ride. From left are the B-17 pilot; Noel Dees; Irma "Babe" Story; Flora Belle Reece; and the plane's co-pilot.

Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program during World War II.

"Babe" Story flew North American AT-6s and Martin B-26s, towing targets. Flora Belle Reece flew AT-6's and towed targets with Martin B-26 Marauders "Ty" Killen flew AT-6 Texans, AT-11's and gunnery trainers (Model 18 Twin Beech or C-45).



Courtesy photo

Diane Barney work — Diane J. Barney Jr. earned her Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate and is currently flying with SkyWest Airlines.

Diane Barney, Jr.

Diane J. Barney Jr., is an amazing young woman who never keeps her feet on the ground. She is a private pilot and aerospace engineer. She worked hard to earn her Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate and is currently flying with SkyWest Airlines. She loves flying and owns a Grumman Tiger, J-3 Piper Cub, and Boeing Stearman.

Originally from Albany, New York, she caught the aerospace bug when she was 12 years old, after her first general aviation flight in an Aeronca Champion.

She earned her B.S. in Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering from Purdue University in 2009. She received her commission from the Boilermaker AFROTC Detachment 220 the same year.

During her six years of active-duty service with the U.S. Air Force, she worked in operational flight test on B-1Bs, RQ-4s, and U-2s.

Since arriving in the Antelope Valley in 2015, she has worked at Scaled Composites, The Spaceship Company, Empirical Systems Aerospace, and served as a contractor for NASA with the X-57 Maxwell. She also serves as president of the Board of Directors for the Mojave Air and Space Port.

It has been great fun knowing all these women who love aviation and enjoy sharing their knowledge with others.



Courtesy photo

Marguerite "Ty" Killan had her first airplane ride in a "Jenny" JN-4. "I was 9 years old and a pilot was giving rides for \$5 per person," she recalled. When her mother balked at the price, the pilot took her and her brother for that price. She wanted to fly from then on. On her 18th birthday she passed the tests for a commercial and flight instructor rating; one of first women to do so. She joined the WASPs in 1942, when they lowered the minimum age from 21 to 18 1/2 years of age. She died in 2011 at age 86.



Courtesy photo

Flora Belle Reece Headshot F- lora Belle Reece in her 1940s WASPs photo.

Flora Belle Reece — WASP

My dear friend and sister Ninety-Nine, Flora Belle Reece, served as a WASP during World War II. She presented numerous programs around the Antelope Valley about her life with the Women Airforce Service Pilot program. I always loved to see past photos when her beautiful blond hair was in braids. She was only nineteen, and looked even younger!

Joining the WASP gave Reece the opportunity to fulfill her dream of flying, something that was only rarely available to women at that time. It was Jackie Cochran who made it possible for so many women to live this dream, she said. "Jackie put an ad in the paper requesting that young women interested in flying sign up and help the war effort," Reece said. "At this point I had never flown, and I needed at least 35 hours to qualify for pilot training." Reece's brother fronted her money for lessons, and the next thing she knew, she was at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas, part of class 44-W-4.

Flora Belle passed away when she was 90. She loved coming to the airport and our friend, Dave VanHoy took her flying in his T-6 Texan



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First female naval aviators



Navy photograph

In 1974 the U.S. Navy designated its first female naval aviators — *The First Six*, four of whom posed for a photograph during their flight instruction. Pictured, from left are: Ens. Rosemary Mariner, Ens. Jane Skiles, Lt. j.g. Barbara Allen, and Lt. j.g. Judith Neuffer. Not shown are Ana Marie Fuqua, and Joellen Drag. Mariner died in 2019 at 65, Skiles in 2022 at 72, and Allen, the first to receive her wings, was killed in a training accident in 1982 at age 33.

TEST (from Page 14)

In 1975, Capt. Jane L. Holley, a student in Test Pilot School class 74B, became the first woman to graduate from the training as an engineer.

In 1990, the National Aeronautical and Space Administration selected Maj. Eileen Collins (a graduate of TPS Class 89B) as a Space Shuttle pilot candidate. Collins was the first woman selected for this program.

In 1993, Lt. Col. Susan J. Helms became the first female military astronaut to enter space when Space Shuttle Endeavor launched on a 5-day mission.

In 2010, Col. Dawn M. Dunlop accepted command of the 412th Test Wing. The first woman to command the test wing, she had also been the first woman to fly an F-22 Raptor when she flew F-22 number 4006 here at Edwards.

The trials and tribulations of early women pioneers need to be remembered and not forgotten. These Airmen risked all that they had for this cause. They impacted their local communities, their nation and their world.



Air Force photograph

Capt. Jane L. Holley, the first female graduate of U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School class 74B, in 1975. Holley is the first woman to graduate from the TPS as a flight test engineer.

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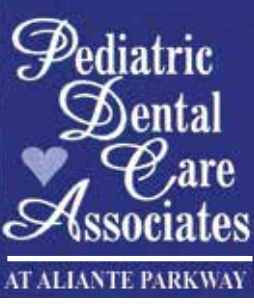
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