



## NCR Diversity and Inclusion Newsletter #14 March 2021

### Women's History Month

Every March, people in the United States celebrate the achievements and history of women as part of Women's History Month.

#### HOW IT STARTED

Educators in Santa Rosa, California, first celebrated Women's History Week in March 1978 to increase awareness of women's contributions to society. Organizers selected a week in early March to correspond with International Women's Day on March 8. Over the next several years, other cities across the country joined Santa Rosa in celebrating Women's History Week.

In 1980, U.S. president Jimmy Carter declared the week of March 8 National Women's History Week, urging everyone in the United States to participate. According to Carter, "too often the women were unsung and sometimes their contributions went unnoticed. But the achievements, leadership, courage, strength, and love of the women who built America was as vital as that of the men whose names we know so well."

The week-long event officially became a month-long one in 1987 when Congress passed a resolution designating March as Women's History Month. Women's History Month has been celebrated in the United States every March since.

#### Did You Know?

1. **Who calculated the flight path that brought Apollo 13 safely home?**
2. **What is the name of latest European rover to travel across the surface of Mars?**
3. **Who was the first women go make a blind instrument landing, flew a bomber across the Atlantic Ocean and exceed the speed of sound?**
4. **Who was first American women in space?**
5. **Name a WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilot) who was from Minnesota?**
6. **Where can CAP Women make their story a part of history?**

**Katherine Johnson** loved to count, and despite the prejudices against both women and African Americans, she was determined to find a way to make her love of math into a career. As one of NASA's "human computers," Johnson hand calculated elaborate equations... including the trajectories that helped launch the Apollo 13 mission to the moon. When disaster befell the Apollo 13 mission, it was Johnson's flight-path calculations that brought the astronauts safely home. This inspiring biography of the mathematician catapulted to fame by Hidden Figures celebrates a love of math and encourages kids to follow their passions.

**Rosalind Franklin's** role in discerning DNA's structure — one of the most important discoveries of the 20th century — is often held up as a classic example of sexism in the sciences. Franklin was an accomplished X-ray crystallographer and, in 1952, she used her knowledge of x-ray diffraction techniques to take the first photo of DNA, referred to as Photo 51. Without her permission, Franklin's photograph was shared with James Watson and Francis Crick who were working on identifying the structure of DNA. Franklin's photo allowed them to deduce that DNA took the form of a double helix; however, when they published a paper *Nature* the following year, they only mentioned Franklin in a footnote. While Watson, Crick and Maurice Wilkins received the Nobel Prize in 1962 for their contributions to science, Franklin had passed away due to cancer four years prior at the age of 37 and was not eligible for the award. Given how frequently Franklin's contributions to unlocking the secrets of DNA are overlooked, especially in schools, many people feel that her role in the discovery has never been honored appropriately.

Until the ESA's announcement, the rover had been known as ExoMars; it's designed to drill into the first 6.5 feet (2 meters) of the Martian surface to look for evidence of past or present life. Franklin's name was chosen by a UK-led committee that sifted through almost 36,000 suggestions from the public. "We had the usual clutch of acronyms, deities and inspirational words," said Dr. Sue Horne, the head space exploration at the UK Space Agency, "but when we got down to the short shortlist — it was the obvious choice." Alice Bunn, international director of the U.K. Space Agency, agrees: "Rosalind Franklin is one of science's most influential women, and her part in the discovery of the structure of DNA was truly groundbreaking," she wrote in a statement. "It's fitting that the robot bearing her name will search for the building blocks of life on Mars, as she did so on Earth through her work on DNA."

The Rosalind Franklin rover launches and lands in 2021. It will become the first European rover to travel across the surface of Mars, and its software is designed with some autonomy so that it can navigate using optical sensors and make "decisions" on the ground about where to travel next. The Rosalind Franklin name reminds us that it is in the human genes to explore."

**Jackie Cochran** rose from a poverty-stricken childhood to become one of history's most accomplished female aviators. Beginning work in a cotton mill at the age of six, Cochran labored at a series of jobs before answering her call to the air. She learned to fly in 1932 while working as a cosmetics saleswoman. Her future husband Floyd Odlum had told Cochran that flying would help her surpass her competition. She flew in the London, England to Melbourne, Australia race in 1934.

In 1935, she became the first woman to fly in the Bendix Trophy Race, which she won in 1938.

Became the first woman to make a blind instrument landing in 1937.

Set new women's records during 1939-40, in altitude and open class speed.

During World War II she was the first woman to fly a bomber across the Atlantic Ocean, leading to the formation of the Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) program for which she received the Distinguished Service Medal.

Received the Harmon Trophy in 1950 as the Aviatix of the Decade.

In 1953, she became the first woman to exceed the speed of sound.

In 1962, subsequently setting 73 records in three years. She exceeded Mach 2 in 1964.

**Sally Kristen Ride** (May 26, 1951 – July 23, 2012) was an American astronaut and physicist. Born in Los Angeles, she joined NASA in 1978, and in 1983 became the first American woman in space. She was the third woman in space overall, after USSR cosmonauts Valentina Tereshkova (1963) and Svetlana Savitskaya (1982). Ride remains the youngest American astronaut to have traveled to space, having done so at the age of 32.<sup>[1][2]</sup> After flying twice on the Orbiter Challenger, she left NASA in 1987.

Ride worked for two years at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Arms Control, then at the University of California, San Diego as a professor of physics, primarily researching nonlinear optics and Thomson scattering. She served on the committees that investigated the Challenger and Columbia Space Shuttle disasters, the only person to participate in both.

**Elizabeth "Betty" Strohfus** (November 15, 1919 – March 6, 2016) was an American aviator and pioneering member of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) during World War II. Strohfus, one of just 1,074 female pilots to earn silver wings for the WASPs, flew noncombat missions from 1943 to 1944, often ferrying military planes throughout the United States.<sup>[1]</sup> She also trained male air and infantry gunners at Las Vegas Army Airfield during the early 1940s.<sup>[1][2][3]</sup> Elizabeth Strohfus was the recipient of two Congressional Gold Medals for her service in the WASPs and was inducted into the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame.<sup>[1]</sup> She was believed to be one of the last surviving WASP aviators.<sup>[1]</sup>

Strohfus, who was the fifth of her parents' six children, was born on November 19, 1919, in Faribault, Minnesota.<sup>[2]</sup> Following high school, Strohfus borrowed \$100 from a local bank, utilizing her bicycle as collateral, and joined the Sky Club, an all-male aviators club.<sup>[1]</sup> She worked as a Sky Club volunteer in exchange for a chance to fly.<sup>[2]</sup> Her first flight was in a Piper Cub.<sup>[2]</sup>

The WASPs were disbanded in December 1944.<sup>[1]</sup> Her application to become a pilot at Northwest Airlines was rejected.<sup>[2]</sup> Instead, she became an aircraft controller in Wyoming.<sup>[2]</sup> She then moved back to Faribault, where she married and had children.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Military Women's Memorial.** For more than 30 years, the Memorial has been permanently documenting military women's experiences and their impact on American, military and women's history. Visitors are invited to look up servicewomen in *the Register* and learn about their impact on our collective history. Servicewomen and women veterans are invited to make their military experiences visible by "registering" their service. By completing a simple form with their dates of service, branch of service, awards and decorations, at least one memorable experience, and a picture in uniform, women took their rightful and visible place in history for all time. Memorial location is at the ceremonial Entrance to Arlington National Cemetery at Memorial Ave. and Schley Dr. Arlington, VA.

To become a **Registered Member** of the Military Women's Memorial, a woman must have served in:

- Civil Air Patrol

To register, go to: <https://womensmemorial.org/index.php/make-herstory/>

Lt Col Bonnie Braun  
NCR Diversity Officer  
(C) 703-477-6868  
U.S. Air Force Auxiliary  
[GoCivilAirPatrol.com](http://GoCivilAirPatrol.com)  
<https://ncrcap.us>

