



NCR Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Cultural Observances, Awareness Information and Events

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Women Making History

Women Airforce Service Pilots

- The WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots) were female pilots who volunteered to fly American military airplanes during World War II.
- At the time, it was thought that women would be incapable of flying such advanced airplanes – and that they should not be involved in the military in any aviation capacity. But there was a serious shortage of available pilots on the home front. Many female pilots wanted to help; in order to do this, they needed to convince the top brass that they could do it.
- To serve their country, these courageous women overcame the challenges raised by those who believed women couldn't fly. The WASP program was formed by combining the WAFS (Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron) and the WFTD (Women's Flying Training Detachment), two units that were set up separately to allow female pilots to support the activities of the military. They were combined as the WASP Program in July 1943.
- The WASP were finally recognized as the first female military pilots to receive the Congressional Gold Medal at a ceremony at the Capitol March 10, 2010.

WASP LITTLE KNOWN FACTS:

- 25,000 applied, 1,830 were accepted into training, and only 1,074 earned their silver wings and, together with 28 WAFS, became WASP.
- The WASP paid their own way to go into training and, when disbanded, they paid their own way back home.
- They received 30 days of orientation to learn military paperwork and to fly by military regulations.
- They delivered 12,650 aircraft of 78 different types.
- 38 WASP and trainees were killed flying for their country. They received no recognition, no honors, no benefits, no gold star in the window, and no American flag allowed to cover their coffins.
- Classmates and friends took up collections to help pay for burial.
- WASP never received the military status they were promised, even though many were sent to Officer's Training School.
- WASP were unceremoniously deactivated in 1944 without benefits and little thanks.
- After they were disbanded in 1944, their records were sealed and marked 'classified' or 'secret' and stored in the archives for over 30 years.
- Historians had no access to the records and accomplishments of the WASP and, consequently, the WASP were left out of most official histories of World War II.
- The WASP were denied Veteran's status for 35 years.
- Their medals and official notification of Veteran's status came in the mail.
- WASP can only be buried at Arlington National Cemetery as 'enlisted,' not with officer's honors.
- In 1994, an airplane at Lackland AFB was dedicated to the WASP and, in 1999, was repainted in the "Korean conflict" colors and re-dedicated to a Korean conflict hero.
- Despite General Hap Arnold's pledge that the Air Force would never forget them – it did, and so did America.

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