

The WASP Women Pilots During WWII

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Back in the days, women were greatly oppressed and were considered to be weak to a certain point, but the second world war spoke feminism louder than ever. It completely transformed the perspective of “delicate” women into something much more fierce and stronger. The World War had all kinds of women doing all the work that was expected to be done by men to which was surprising at that time considering that women did not use to work before that especially not in the industries. Similarly, the army had women too but the best of them were the pilots. Around 1000 women were selected by the U.S. government for the intensive 7-month training course that made them the first female pilots to become a part of the air force. Due to severe pilot shortages, selecting women for the job was completely out of the ordinary at that moment. Recruitment of women enabled the Air Force to maintain delivery of aircraft, ferry supplies and perform other non-combative actions that helped in the war. These group of women were known as WASPs: Women Airforce Service Pilots.

Due to prevailing misogyny at that time, these women were denied their rightful military honors, compensation and were designated as civilians. All of these women risked their lives and many even lost them but right after the war, these women were not acknowledged for their bravery. Jacqueline Cochran and Nancy Harkness Love both suggested improvements for the training but they were up against a lot of resistance against the idea of women in military. 80% of all ferrying missions were carried out by the WASP pilots. Over 12,000 aircraft was delivered by the and these women also freed around 900 male pilots for combat duty. This was formed in August 5, 1943. This arrangement of WASP with the US military ended on December 20, 1944. 38 WASP pilots lost their lives and one went missing. They we're granted the veteran status in 1977 and were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2009, it is one of the highest honors given to civilians. It all started with one initiative taken by Cochran which was backed by the first lady then, Eleanor Roosevelt who introduced Cochran to the U.S. Army Air Force General, Henry H. “Hap” Arnold who further supported the idea and to ensure that the public perceived the idea of women taking part in the war and flying aircraft. Women saved up every penny that they could find to apply for a pilot's license. Furthermore, they had to apply and pass the Army Air Cops physical and had to fund their own cost of transportation to Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas for their basic training. This already put a strain on the women financially but still they were motivated to serve their country.

Women in WASP played a vital role in not just the World War but they also gave feminism a fresh start and further encouraged the idea of men and women being equals. These women worked hard despite not getting the recognition that they deserved at the beginning. They we're acknowledged later for their services and are till now remembered as heroes.