



Women Airforce Service Pilots of WW II

Long Island Early Fliers Education Foundation

November – December 2021 Newsletter

Editor: Fred Coste Volume 6, Issue 6

Editor's Note:

I had spent a few years owning and operating a Part 141 Flight School that specialized in flight training for high school teenagers. It didn't take long, before I noticed some differences in the way male and female pilots learn to fly. While the male machismo, initially may take on an heir of muscling the plane through the sky, women tend to be gentler; seemingly at ease and sometimes more patient, which likely lead to the earlier development of the muscle memory that made them not only good pilots, but fast learners.

It's almost hard to image that in the lead up to World War II, many in the military believed that training women to fly was a hairbrained idea! It took real determination to convince the Pentagon that women could serve an important role in military aviation and winning the war.

In 1939, Pilot Jacqueline "Jackie" Cochran wrote to the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, to suggest the idea of using women pilots in non-combat missions. Cochran was introduced by Roosevelt to General Hap Arnold, chief of the Army Air Force, and to General Robert Olds, who became the head of the Air Transport Command. Arnold asked her to ferry a bomber to Great Britain in order to generate publicity for the idea of women piloting military aircraft. While in England, she volunteered for the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) and recruited twenty five American women pilots to help fly planes in Europe.



Jaqueline Cochran

In the summer of 1941, Cochran and test-pilot Nancy Harkness Love independently submitted proposals to the U.S. Army Air Forces to allow women pilots in non-combat missions after the outbreak of World War II in Europe. The intent was to free male pilots for combat roles by using qualified female pilots to ferry aircraft from the factories to military bases, as well as tow drones and aerial targets. By that time, the U.S. was building its air power and military presence in anticipation of direct involvement in the conflict.



Nancy Harkness Love

WASP recruits had to be between 21 and 35 years old, in good health, in possession of a pilot's license and 35 hours of flight time. These women were also required to be at least five feet, two inches tall. Over 25,000 women applied to join the WASP; 1,830 were accepted with only 1,074 completing the training. Several WASPs had been trained previously in the Civilian Pilot Training Program. Many of the women came from wealthy backgrounds that had afforded pilot training earlier in life, or had husbands who helped pay for the expense of their training. All WASP recruits were interested in serving their country.



*Start of WASP training – class of 43-3
January 1943*

WASP training spanned 18 groups of women, with each group designated by the year training started, then by the group number for that year. The first group, known as the “The Originals” was also the first group of the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS), led by Nancy Love.

The second group called themselves the Guinea Pigs which were Jackie Cochran's first class of women pilots for the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD). The Guinea Pigs started training at the Houston Municipal Airport (now

William P. Hobby Airport) on November 16, 1942, as part of the 319th Army Air Force Women's Flying Training Detachment. Unlike the WAFS, the women who reported to Houston did not have uniforms and had to find their own lodging.



Avenger Field - WASP trainees

Although each WASP had a pilot's license, they were retrained to fly "the Army way" by the U.S. Army Air Forces at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas. While the WASP were not trained for combat, their course of instruction was essentially the same as male aviation cadets. They received no gunnery training and very little formation and aerobatic flying, but went through the maneuvers necessary to be able to recover from any unusual attitude. The percentage of those eliminated compared favorably with the elimination rate for male cadets in the Central Flying Training Command.

Many WASP recruits went on to specialized flight training. They spent around 12 hours a day at the airfield with half the day spent practicing actual flight and the other half studying. By graduation, WASP recruits had 560 hours of ground school and 210 hours of flight training. They knew Morse code, meteorology,

military law, physics, aircraft mechanics, and navigation.

After their training, the WASP were stationed at 122 air bases across the U.S., where they assumed numerous flight-related missions. Ferrying planes from factory to airbases made up the first duties of the WASP, flying 80 percent of all ferrying missions. They delivered 12,652 aircraft of 78 different types. In addition, a few exceptionally qualified women were allowed to pilot jet aircraft as well as test rocket-propelled planes.

When men were less willing to fly certain difficult planes, such as the YP-59 and B-29 Super Fortress, General Arnold recruited two WASPs to fly these aircraft. Arnold believed that if men saw women fly these planes successfully, they would be "embarrassed" into taking these missions willingly. Two WASPs, Dorthea Johnson and Dora Dougherty Strother, were chosen to fly the B-29. They flew to Alamogordo in the B-29s where there was a crowd waiting to see them land. General Arnold's plan worked, "From that day on, there was no more grumbling from male pilots assigned to train on and fly the B-29 Super Fortress."

Thirty-eight members lost their lives in accidents, eleven died during training, and twenty-seven were killed on active duty missions. Because they were not considered part of the military by the guidelines, a fallen WASP was sent home at family expense. Traditional military honors or note of heroism, such as allowing the U.S. flag to be placed on the coffin or displaying a service flag in a window, were not allowed.

Life wasn't always sweet at Sweetwater. The training Women Airforce Service Pilots received was as rigorous as that of the male cadets. Although the women were already licensed pilots, they had to learn to fly America's military aircraft. If an instructor felt a trainee was not meeting the requirements during any phase of flight training, that trainee was sent on a check ride with an Army check pilot. If the trainee failed the check ride, she went before the commanding officer and a board who determined whether or not she would stay in the program. If expelled, action was swift. A woman could be in camp one day, and her locker cleaned out the next.

Add to that, their male-sizes-only "zoot suit" uniforms didn't fit, the weather was hot and dusty or cold and snowy, the bays (barracks) were crowded, the latrines were spartan, and sometimes meat loaf, grits, and squash just wasn't a dream dinner. All in all, becoming a WASP took guts, skill, and stamina.



Dori Marland Martin

*When I heard about Pearl Harbor, I was horrified. I wanted to do something in the war. That's why I learned to fly.
Dori Marland Martin, Class 43-8*

July 8, 1943

*Dearest Sis,
Kindly note change of address. I am so happy to be here and can hardly realize that I am actually a part of this marvelous new program. It was a real thrill when I first saw these tremendous air fields, the huge hangars, and the beautiful planes in the air; my heart simply started to pound.
Love, Spook -*

*(Adaline Alma Blank, WASP Class 43-8,
Avenger Field, Sweetwater, TX)*



Adaline Alma Blank

The Women Airforce Service Pilots faced some unexpected challenges and resistance when they signed up. Friends and family wondered: "Why on earth is she leaving her family, her freedom, a good job, a teaching career, the Rockettes, college?"

Male flight instructors at Avenger Field wondered publicly if the women could really fly these military planes, and male pilots worried privately that they could.

Was it possible that a woman could actually fly a plane as well as a man? And if she did – and he was released from stateside duties as a result – did he really want to be sent on combat missions overseas? Success for the Women Airforce Service Pilots was a complicated issue. Jackie Cochran herself noted that the female pilots were always reminded to "leave the glamour and the glory" for their brother pilots who were over on the front lines.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge was one the Women Airforce Service Pilots discovered they most cared about when they arrived at Avenger Field. Above all else, they didn't want to fail.



Fifinella- Women Airforce Service Pilots mascot

July 15, 1943

Dearest Sis,

We have been flying for a week. That PT is so different from those cubs I flew at Spartan that I feel as if I had never been in a plane before. Already my big worry is that I might "wash out." It's going to be plenty tough to come up to Army standards. Several from W-7 "washed" today. Everyone gets depressed when they go; tonight, the Recreation Room was like a morgue--you just can't help wondering "Will I be next?" Love, Spook –

(Adaline Alma Blank, WASP Class 43-8, Avenger Field Sweetwater, TX)

But there was at least one thing that made up for all that doubt and discouragement at Avenger Field in Sweetwater - *Flying*.

Women Airforce Service Pilots flew 70 hours each of primary and advanced training. They practiced take-offs and landings, snap rolls, parachute bail-outs, night flying, cross country flying, and aerobatics. Primary instructors even flew trainees upside down to demonstrate the importance of safety belts.

Even though the women were learning to fly new planes, they were all experienced pilots. And like most pilots, they savored the freedom of the skies.

"There's a romance to flying. You're away from the earth, defying gravity, and you have to do your best; there's no safety net." -

Ethel Meyer Finley, Class 43-5



November 2, 1943

Dearest Sis,

I am enclosing a picture of our AT6. This is real FLYING. We call it our pin-up ship. 620 horsepower and a beauty. The difference between the BT and this AT6 is about the same as that between an Oklahoma work horse and a Blue Grass bred racer. This is a streamline baby. Handles like a dream.

Jacqueline Cochran was here this week. She told us that our class has been assigned to the Army Training Command. We have seventeen girls in training now at a four engine Flying Fortress school in Ohio; our class will go to Army Navigation, Bombardier, and Gunnery Schools; we will train to fly the cadets on their routine mission flights. Doesn't that sound exciting? The future of this experiment depends wholly on us. What a responsibility. Oh, there is never a dull day at Avenger.

Love, Spook

*Adaline Alma Blank, WASP Class 43-8,
Avenger Field, Sweetwater, TX*



P-63 Kingcobra

*"The P-63 was quite an airplane. I just loved it. I flew as many as I could, as far as I could, as fast as I could." –
Betty Archibald Fernandes, Class 43-3*

After all the hours of flying, studying, working, worrying, and dreaming, 1,074 female pilots graduated from Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas to become Women Airforce Service Pilots.

The WASP took wing and flew into history. Along with their diplomas, Women Airforce Service Pilots were handed orders to report to one of 120 Army air bases or

air fields across the U.S. Their missions included towing targets, ferrying planes, training bombardiers, tracking radar, providing instrument training to cadets, flying pursuits, testing engineering repairs, and multiple other assignments. In total, Women Airforce Service Pilots flew more than 60 million miles in service to their country.

Although they were stationed at U.S. military bases and flew U.S. Army Air Force planes, Women Airforce Service Pilots were classified as civilians. That seeming contradiction had long been an irritant for WASP.

By 1943, the issue had also become a concern for the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, who, like the rest of the nation, had become convinced of the value of the program to the war efforts. In 1944, Representative John Costello of California sponsored House Bill 4219 to commission the Women Airforce Service Pilots as full-fledged military personnel. *It failed.*



*"Then we got our wings, and it was the most glorious time in our life that we got through it. I made it – got my wings – by golly I can fly." -
Susie Winston Bain, Class 44-4*

In October 1944, Hap Arnold, Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, ordered Jacqueline Cochran to deactivate the Women Airforce Service Pilots program.

Director Cochran's final speech on December 7, 1944 at Avenger Field included the following:

"The emotions of happiness and sorrow are pretty close together today, and I am experiencing them both at the same time, as well as the third emotion of pride.

Happiness also swells within me from the knowledge that the WASP have successfully completed their twofold mission. By twofold, I mean we have flown scores of millions of miles in relieving the pilot shortage and we have proved that women can be trained as pilots easily and used in many ways in the air effectively. What the WASP have done is without precedent in the history of the world."

*Women Airforce Service Pilots Director
Jacqueline Cochran*

In the years following the war, the WASP story was rarely told. After the program was disbanded at the end of 1944, WASP records were sealed, classified, and stored in the government archives for 33 years.

In 1976, the United States Air Force announced that women would be permitted to fly military aircraft, labeling it a "first" in U.S. history. As women who had flown for the nation over 30 years earlier, WASP united in an effort to set the record straight.

In 1977, with the help of Senator Barry Goldwater (Arizona), Representatives Corinne "Lindy" Boggs (Louisiana), Margaret Heckler (Massachusetts), and Hap Arnold's son, Bruce Arnold, the WASP were finally granted veteran status.

Seven years later, in 1984, their service medals came in the mail.

On March 10, 2010, the Women Airforce Service Pilots were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of their pioneering military service, exemplary record, and revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

*****LIEFEF News*****

Our most recent meeting was held on October 17. President Mark Loiacono opened the meeting by calling for a moment of silence to remember long time LIEFC member June Bartlett. In the 1970's, June was instrumental in restoring our JN-4 that was owned by Charles Lindbergh and is now on loan to the Cradle of Aviation Museum.



June working on the Jenny restoration

Our featured speaker was LIEFEF Vice President AJ Manfredi who provided a detailed description of the restoration of his Bucker Jungmann, as well as a description of the airplane's history.



*One impressive restoration!
Thank you, A.J.*

In other meeting announcements:

1. We are actively working on the possibility of obtaining a Fleet biplane from Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome.

2. We held an aviation yard sale during the B.A.S. Community Appreciation Day on September 19th.

Many visitors came through the hangar and enjoyed mini tours and display of the Link Trainer restoration progress. Attendees learned the stories behind our Bleriot 11 and our WW-II L-3 that sports its North Africa Theater paint.

In addition to our usual Ice Cream sales we put many model kits out for display and sale and were very successful. Some of the funds gained will go toward the Link restoration efforts.



Suffolk County Council of Boy Scouts of America held its Webelos Woods on October 3rd at the LIEF hangar

3. LIEFEF once again hosted Suffolk County Council BSA Trailblazer District WEBLOS Woods. This program encourages Cub Scouts to continue on in Scouting under both BSAb and BSAg troops. (b-boy; g-girl) Scouting is interested in the potential for setting up an explorer post with the LIEFEF.



4. "Glider?" Project, anyone? An early glider aircraft donated to LIEF is being assembled. We are trying to figure out its lineage and donation path, along with its actual configuration. It's a jigsaw puzzle

right now, sporting a gull wing open framed fabric type glider with a unique “hoop” forward fuselage frame.



Any info or pictures would be appreciated. Inquiries to the National Soaring Museum have been unsuccessful.

Save the date!

We are holding a Christmas / Holiday gathering this year at the hangar on Sunday December 12th. From 1pm – 5pm \$45.00 per person Please see sign up /reservation page in this issue!

Meeting Program and Website Committee

We are happy to announce that new member Milton Josephs has volunteered

to Chair our Meeting Program and Website Update Committee. Milton has been provided training from our website developer and will be responsible for keeping information up to date, helping us develop an online store and arranging for guest speakers at our monthly meetings.

We look forward to the addition of Milton’s talent and creativity for the Foundation.

Check out our website at www.liefef.org

*We hope to see
you Sunday,
November 17th*

&

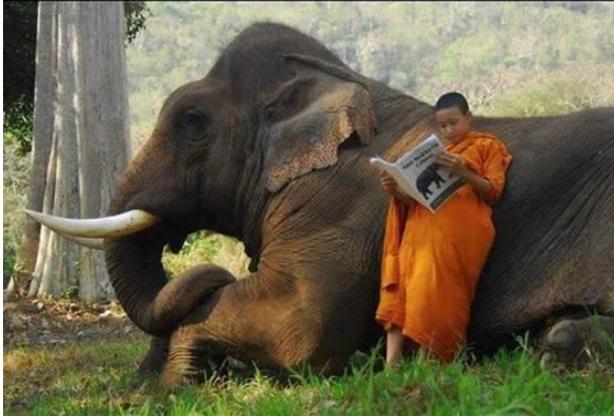
*At our Holiday Party
on December 12th*



Time to smile.....



When you bought an elephant and are reading the instructions



My humans are jerks.



In the 1980s, A&W tried to compete with the Mcdonald's Quarter Pounder by selling a 1/3 pound burger at a lower cost. The product failed, because most customers thought the 1/4 pound was bigger.

This is why I don't argue online.



The first bottle of Coca-Cola from 1894 contained around 3.5 grams of cocaine.

Explains why our parents & grandparents could walk to & from school, uphill, both ways, in the snow, barefoot. 🙄🤔😂



"Siri, why am I so bad at relationships with women?"

"This is Alexa."



Amal & Juan are identical twins. Their mom only carries one photo because if you've seen Juan you've seen Amal...

100 years ago everyone owned a horse and only the rich had cars.

Today, everyone has a car and only the rich have horses

Oh how the stables have turned

Long Island Early Fliers Education Foundation

Bayport Aerodrome,
Bayport, NY



P.O. Box 43, Holbrook, NY
11741

Membership Application

Name: _____

Annual Dues*

Address: _____

Individual membership: \$35.00

Family membership: \$50.00

Email: _____

I am applying for:

Occupation: _____

Individual ___ Family ___ Membership

Names of family members joining: _____

Background information: (Please check all that apply)

Aviation Enthusiast	Private Pilot	Work(ed) in aviation industry	
Model Builder	Commercial Pilot	Aviation mechanic	
History Buff	Airline Pilot	Aircraft owner	
Computer technician	Enjoy writing	Enjoy photography	

I, _____, being interested in the preservation of all facets of aviation history, particularly that pertaining to Long Island's aviation heritage, do hereby apply for membership in the Long Island Early Fliers Education Foundation.

(signature)

(date)

The Long Island Early Fliers Education Foundation. is a non-profit organization, founded in 1956 and chartered by the New York State Education Department. It is dedicated to recording, preserving and disseminating information about aviation and Long Island's Aviation Heritage.

Donations of cash and aviation artifacts are tax deductible and always appreciated.

Donations of your time and talent are also gratefully accepted.

Long Island Early Fliers Education Foundation

Holiday Party is back!

Sunday, December 12th

in our hangar at Bayport Aerodrome.



Festivities are from 1:00 – 5:00

\$45.00 per person includes

Food, beer, wine, soda, coffee and dessert

please sign up early!

Names: _____

Number attending: _____ X \$45.00 each = \$ _____

We hope to see you there!

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www.liefef.org

Long Island Early Fliers Education Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in 1956 and Chartered by the New York State Education Department. We are dedicated to aviation education and preserving Long Island's aviation heritage. Volunteers who want to help educate and preserve our history are always welcome. Annual Membership in our organization is \$35.00 for individuals; \$50.00 for families.

Donations of aviation memorabilia, aircraft and aircraft parts, aviation clothing, display quality models and items of historic significance are always welcome and greatly appreciated.

Cash donations, as well as artifact donations are tax deductible. You may visit our facility at Bayport Aerodrome, Vitamin Drive, Bayport New York most Wednesdays between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Appointments are necessary as airports are secure locations and can also be arranged at other times for your convenience. Contact us at: L.I.E.F.E.F., P.O. Box 43, Holbrook, NY, 11741 or call (631)-523-5407 (Fred Coste) or fax: 631-588-2147

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