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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Katherine E. Landdeck entitled "Experiment in the Cockpit: The Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

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EXPERIMENT IN THE COCKPIT:
THE WOMEN AIRFORCE SERVICE PILOTS
OF WORLD WAR II

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Katherine Elizabeth Landdeck
May 1997

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the
Women Airforce Service Pilots
whose kindness and willingness to share their experiences
made this work possible.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) as pilots for the Army Air Force during World War II. Numerous primary sources were cited for this study including memoirs, newspapers, magazines and Army Air Force and government documents. Forty-three WASPs provided personal information either through personal interviews or questionnaires.

The WASPs were primarily Caucasian, middle-class and well-educated. Eighty-seven percent of the women had at least one year of college and fifty-seven percent had at least their four year degree before joining the WASP. The original group of women to fly for the Army Air Force, the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS), were highly experienced pilots and proved themselves capable of flying military aircraft. The WAFS had an accident rate lower than their male counterparts and by April 1943 were no longer limited in the types of aircraft they were allowed to fly. The name WASP began to be utilized in August 1943, and by late 1943 the WASPs began to fly primarily pursuit aircraft. With the addition of less-experienced pilots and the increasing number of flights in the more challenging pursuit aircraft, the women's accident rate increased.

Upon disbandment, the women were evaluated by their bases. Although the bases reported the women were less mechanically inclined than their male counterparts, their abilities and efforts as ferry pilots were highly commended. The WASP disbandment was not through any fault of their own, but rather a number of circumstances beyond the women's control. The shift in the war in favor of the Allies, the attack from unemployed male pilots, and the negative attitudes of the American public toward women replacing men rather than releasing them, all contributed to WASP disbandment. Overall, the WASPs were found to have been effective pilots for the Army Air Force, and an important part of women's history.

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ACRONYMS

AAF - Army Air Force

AT - designates an advanced trainer aircraft, for example the AT-6 Texan

ATA - Air Transport Auxiliary, in Britain

ATC - Air Transport Command, a part of the Army Air Force

B - designates a bomber aircraft, for example the B-29 Superfortress

BT - designates a basic trainer aircraft, for example the BT-13 Vultee

CAA - Civil Aeronautics Administration, the precursor to today's Federal Aviation Admin.

CAP - Civil Air Patrol

CPTP - Civilian Pilot Training Program

FERD - Ferrying Division, a part of the Air Transport Command

P - designates a pursuit aircraft, for example the P-51 Mustang

WAAC - Women's Auxiliary Army Corps

WAC - Women's Army Corps

WAFS - Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron

WASP - Women Airforce Service Pilots

WFTD - Women's Flying Training Detachment

WTS - War Training Service, run by the Civil Aeronautics Administration

WASP TIMELINE

Sept 1942 - Love begins recruiting women pilots for FERD; Cochran begins WFTD

Jan - March 1943 - Love ferries AT-6, P-51, C-47; Betty Gillies ferries P-47

March 21, 1943 - Cornelia Fort killed

April 17, 1943 - order that WAFS to fly anything capable

April 24, 1943 - 1st WFTDs graduate 43-W-1; sent to 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th ferrying groups

June 1943 - FERD reports that WFTD well-trained

July 1, 1943 - WAC part of Army; within month ATC urging WASP incorp into WAC

July - Aug 1943 - Cochran: Director of Women Pilots; Love: Executive for WAFS;
WASPs created

September 1943-June 1944 - FERD questions ability of new women to become pursuit pilots; FERD requests specialized training for only 25% best trainees

Jan 15, 1944 - CAA War Training Service prog. eliminated; AAF announced CPT programs to end June 30, 1944.

Feb 17, 1944 - Rep. John Costello proposes WASP militarization bill (H.R. 4219)

Feb 24, 1944 - bill proposed to commission CAA-WTS pilots; Ramspeck begins invest.

June 5, 1944 - Ramspeck report released

June 21, 1944 - Battle over WASP bill on House floor; vote: 188 to 169, 73 not voting

June 26, 1944 - Arnold: no new recruits, but complete training of those already started, and continue utilization of WASPs already trained.

Aug 7 1944 - Cochran: militarize with Senate bill (S. 1810) or disband WASP

Oct 3, 1944 - Arnold: with graduation of last class in December, all WASP to be deactivated; FERD strongly objected.

December 20, 1944 - WASP deactivated

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

While practicing landings with a student in Honolulu, Cornelia Fort was forced to maneuver violently to avoid hitting an incoming plane. When she looked back to see the other plane she spotted the bright red balls on top of its wings and saw formations of more bombers coming toward her. Fort watched, helpless and with heart breaking, as Pearl Harbor was bombed. She and her student landed safely, but not everyone escaped harm that day.¹ As the news of Pearl Harbor raced across the United States few people could have predicted the changes the nation would face over the next four years. Technology advanced and the roles of men and women were altered. As men went to war, American women stepped forward to fill the jobs they left behind and the new jobs the massive war machine demanded. Some women stayed home and tried to make do with rationing and missing husbands, while other women went to war themselves in a variety of positions, including as military pilots. All of the roles women filled are worth some consideration in order to better understand the totality of the war.

American women did what they could for the war effort and to bring their men home. Voluntary services were an important part of the women's efforts, and encompassed women of all ages. Organizations such as the Red Cross were vital to the war effort, making surgical dressings, running blood banks and carrying out other important duties.² The United Services Organizations (USO) volunteers spent hours of their own time trying to make "the lonely feel at home."³ Thousands of women became

¹ Cornelia Fort, "At the Twilight's Last Gleaming" *The 99 News*, November 1985, 13. Originally published in *Woman's Home Companion*, July 1943, 19.

² Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II* (NY: Facts on File, 1991), 16.

³ *Ibid.*, 230-231.

part of the "Women's Land Army", carrying out all aspects of the agricultural needs of the nation. Many of the women who did not participate in agriculture on a full-time or seasonal basis grew "Victory Gardens" at home to supplement their families' ration coupons and to enable more food to be sent to the men and women at the front. Despite their efforts to enrich their families' diets, the women still dealt with shortages regularly, particularly of sugar, butter and meat.⁴

Millions of women became an important part of the work force during the war as well. As American men left for the military, women stepped into their jobs and the war created new opportunities for the women. Sixteen percent of working women were holding jobs in the war industries by 1944 and married women were targeted as potential workers for the first time.⁵ Once the initial resistance to the idea of full-time homemakers working was overcome by propaganda efforts, they eventually made up one-third of all women defense workers. In 1944, for the first time in US history, married women outnumbered single women in the work force.⁶

The jobs women held during the war were varied. While many women continued to hold the pre-war traditionally female jobs as teachers and office clerks, others stepped into jobs traditionally held by men. Their duties in the war industries were among the most non-traditional roles during the war. The image of Rosie the Riveter is the most widely known of women war workers. Thousands of women worked in the aircraft industry as riveters, welders, engineers and numerous other positions. Women also worked in the shipyards of the nation helping to build and repair ships necessary for the war effort. Nearly any job that needed to be filled found women waiting to fill it. Yet another need for women during the war was as members of the military.

⁴ Ibid., 203, 205-206.

⁵ Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (USA: Meridian, 1988), 10.

⁶ Ibid., 13.

Some 13,000 women served in the Navy and Marines during the First World War, clearly proving the willingness of women to serve in the military. The women were not retained between the wars, perhaps indicative of the attitudes of the time that a woman's place was in the home. The emergency of the Second World War would force attitudes to change, if only temporarily, and the United States would incorporate even more women into all branches of the Armed Services. In May 1942 President Roosevelt signed the bill creating the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). By the end of July the Navy had their own women's corps, the Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service, known to all as the WAVES. The primary difference between the WAACs and the WAVES was that the WAVES were brought into the Navy on an equal footing with men, rather than as an auxiliary corp. The WAAC did not become a full partner in the Army until their transition into the Women's Army Corps (WAC) in July 1943. The requirements for the WAVES were higher than the WAAC as well: a college degree or two years of college and two years of professional work experience. Both groups required their women to be older than the men in the same service.⁷

The Army and Navy women were joined by the Coast Guard's SPARS (*Semper Paratus* - Always Ready) on November 22, 1942. And on January 28, 1943, the Marines finally began enlisting women. They were not differentiated from men by any particular name, and were simply called Marines.⁸ Recruiting for all four groups was fierce, with the WACs having huge, unrealistic goals. The other services would reach or come close to reaching their objectives, but the WACs would not even come close. The government considered drafting women into the WAC at one point, and a September 1943 Gallup Poll revealed that 81% of those polled preferred drafting single women into the WAC over

⁷ Weatherford, *American Women*, 31-32.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

drafting married men with families for the same non-combat duties.⁹ A draft of women was never activated and many women apparently saw the lack of a draft as proof that the need for women in the military was not crucial. Thousands of women were making good money in the war industries and many could not afford to lose their high wages, particularly those with husbands who had given up jobs to be in the military themselves. One civilian organization that worked closely with the military and had fourteen times more women apply for the program than were accepted were the women pilots.

Women had been a part of aviation since its inception. Wilbur and Orville Wright's sister Katherine contributed both knowledge and money to their efforts to fly. Orville Wright later spoke of his sister as essential to their success. "When the world speaks of the Wrights, it must include my sister," Wright said, "she inspired much of our effort."¹⁰ Katherine Wright never learned to fly, but Blanche Stuart Scott became the first woman to solo a heavier than air craft on September 2, 1910.¹¹ Harriet Quimby followed and became the first American woman, and only the second woman in the world, to earn her pilot's license on August 1, 1911. Frenchwoman Raymonde de la Roche earned her license in 1910.¹² Quimby was followed by many women including Marjorie and Katherine Stimson, Ruth Law, and African-American barnstormer Bessie Coleman. More and more women began to fly, and in late 1929 formed the women's pilot organization, the

⁹ Dr. George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol.1 (NY: Random House, 1972) 406. The question read: "The Army can either draft 300,000 single women, aged 21-35, for the WACS for non-fighting jobs, or it can draft the same number of married men with families for the same work. Which plan would you favor?"

¹⁰ Henry M. Holden, *Ladybirds: The Untold Story of Women Pilots in America* (USA: Black Hawk Publishing, 1992), 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹² *Ibid.*, 19.

Ninety-Nines.¹³ The Ninety-Nines, named after the ninety-nine original members, elected Amelia Earhart as their first president.

Amelia Earhart was an American icon in the 1930s. Called "Lady Lindy" as much for her flying prowess as for her tall, lean frame which resembled Charles Lindbergh's, Earhart was at the center of women's aviation activities. In May 1927, Lindbergh made his historic flight across the Atlantic Ocean. In June 1928, Earhart became the first woman to cross the Atlantic, albeit as a passenger of a male crew. She became an instant celebrity, but in May 1932 she flew across the Atlantic on her own and became immortal. Earhart's image inspired hundreds of women to take an interest in aviation, and when she was lost at sea in July 1937, she was mourned by the entire nation.¹⁴

Earhart's journeys were well publicized, but other women aviators made the news as well. Women began competing in the prestigious Bendix Trophy Race, a transcontinental speed race, in 1935. Amelia Earhart and Jacqueline Cochran were the only women entrants. In 1936 Louise Thaden and Blanche Noyes took first place, Laura Ingalls came in second and Amelia Earhart and Helen Richey finished in fifth. The initiators of the race had not thought women would be capable of tackling the race with the same stamina as the men and had offered a \$2,500 prize to the first woman to finish the race. As a result of their win, Thaden and Noyes won the \$2,500 and the \$4,500 first prize. Women had been racing since the early 1930s, but the Bendix win was significant because it was a grueling long distance race. Jacqueline Cochran re-emphasized women's abilities by winning the 1938 Bendix Race in aircraft designer Alexander de Seversky's new P-35.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., 51.

¹⁴ Ibid., 62-63.

¹⁵ Claudia M. Oakes, *United States Women in Aviation, 1930-1939* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 30, 37.

Women continued to break records of all sorts in the 1930s, everything from transcontinental speed records to the record for the most consecutive barrel rolls. The professional opportunities for women were, unfortunately, dwindling at the same time. As aviation became more common, and women's flying made the general public feel more secure about the idea, companies no longer had to hire women to emphasize their safety.¹⁶ Some women were able to make careers out of aviation in a few limited areas, but Helen Richey came the closest to breaking into the boy's club of commercial aviation. In December 1934, Richey was hired as a co-pilot by Central Airlines. Although well-known as a racing and stunt pilot, Richey was hired more for her publicity value as a woman than for her piloting expertise. She was not allowed to fly in bad weather and was refused admission to the all-male pilots' union. Ten months after she was hired Richey disgustingly resigned her position. She had only been allowed to fly a dozen round trips.¹⁷

Other women found some success as flight instructors, particularly as the United States moved closer to war. The government's Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP) used some women as flight instructors, and in 1941 Phoebe Omelie began her school for women flight instructors with the financial support of the Tennessee Bureau of Aeronautics. The school produced women flight instructors who were in high demand by the CPTP, a program that had eliminated women as students in 1941 in anticipation of war.¹⁸ As the war began, many women, white and black, became involved in the Civil Air Patrol (CAP). Many acted as instructors and most felt pressure to succeed. CAP member Georgette Chapelle explained:

Put it this way: Women are accepted in the patrols as equals with men - in flying, in leadership, in the suppression of temperament. It's

¹⁶ Ibid., 47.

¹⁷ Ibid., 13.

¹⁸ Deborah G. Douglas, *United States Women in Aviation, 1940-1985* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 8.

up to you to prove that this is the basis on which you want to remain,
for every girl who accepts discipline cheerfully makes it easier for the
next ten girls to follow her pioneering.¹⁹

Women grasped the opportunities the war opened up in aviation and took jobs not only as flight instructors, but also as parachute riggers and instructors of male cadets in the Link Trainers (a simulator to test the pilots' instrument skills). Although until 1942 American women were limited to these types of aviation jobs, in places where the war raged early, women were already flying military aircraft for their nations.

In the besieged nation of Russia, women not only flew, but they flew in combat, and often at night. The women were known as Night Witches and flew against the German Luftwaffe and killed and died the same as the Russian men. Their night bombing missions made many of the women registered Soviet Heroines, one of the highest honors bestowed on Soviet citizens, and they are still revered by the Russians today.²⁰ Another group of women who carried out an important duty flying during the war was the women of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) in Great Britain. Unlike the Russian women, the ATA women did not fly combat for Great Britain, but they did aid in the success of the allied cause. The ATA's primary duty was to ferry aircraft from the factories to the airbases for the Royal Air Force. Although initially the women were limited to flying light trainer aircraft, as they proved their flying abilities they slowly made the transition into more advanced planes. By June 1943 the women were paid rates equal to the men and flew any of the 120 types of planes the ATA flew, including the four-engine bombers.²¹

It was not only British women who took advantage of the flying opportunities with the ATA. Women from nine other nations flew for the ATA, including women from New

¹⁹ Ibid., 9.

²⁰ Charlyne Creger, *A Moment in Russia*, Short essay by Creger given to author and still in author's possession.

²¹ Pauline Gower, "The ATA Girls," *Flying* (August 1943), 31.

Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Poland, Chile, Canada, Ireland, Holland, and the United States.²² The American contingent was by far the largest with twenty-six women becoming involved in the ATA. Jacqueline Cochran recruited some of the women to fly in Britain partially to help the British war effort, and partially to help demonstrate to American military leaders that women were capable and helpful as military pilots. The American women began arriving in Britain in the spring of 1942. While Cochran was in Britain, the Ferrying Division of the Air Transport Command, a part of the United States' Army Air Force (AAF), began to utilize women pilots in America. When she discovered women were going to fly for the AAF, Cochran hurried back to the United States to be certain the women were utilized and led as she saw fit.

As early as May 1940, Nancy Love, a Vassar-educated, highly experienced commercial pilot, suggested to the government that women could be used as pilots in time of national emergency. In July 1941, Jacqueline Cochran, a successful pilot and business woman who had been born in poverty and worked her way to wealth and influence, made her own suggestion for the utilization of women pilots to President Franklin Roosevelt himself. Cochran's plan was bolder than Love's. Cochran proposed that women pilots be trained to replace men in all non-combat flying duties. Love proposed that a small, elite group of highly qualified women be utilized. General Henry "Hap" Arnold of the Army Air Force rejected the proposals of both women on the grounds that replacements for the men were not needed. Once the war began and the need for pilots increased, that attitude would change. The first part of the Army Air Force to experience serious shortages of pilots was the Ferrying Division of the Air Transport Command. The Ferrying Division, or FERD, was responsible for ferrying AAF planes from the factories to training bases or

²² E.C. Cheeseman, *Brief Glory: The Story of ATA* (CT: Prescott Publishing, 1979 [reprint, originally published in Leicester: Harbrough Pub. Co., 1946]), appendix c.

points of debarkation. Due to the large number of new planes being built, the pace of ferrying the planes was furious. The FERD desperately needed pilots, and they turned to women as an experimental answer to their problem.

In early September 1942, Nancy Love was appointed Director of Women Pilots and began recruiting women to fly for the FERD. These women were required to be highly experienced pilots and after a short training period, became civilian ferry pilots for the FERD. The women pilots were designated as Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, or WAFS. As the WAFS began to fly with the FERD, Cochran claimed her spot as a leader of women pilots. On September 15th, Cochran began organizing the Women's Flying Training Detachment, or WFTD, with the blessing of AAF General Henry "Hap" Arnold. The WFTD was created to train women pilots who had some experience, but were not qualified to join the WAFS directly. The women moved through the army-style training as classes, being designated by the year they were to graduate and the order in which they would graduate. For example, the first class was class 43-W-1, because they graduated in 1943 and they were the first class. The "W" designated that they were women, but when addressing themselves the women normally left the "W" out. The next class to graduate in 1943 was class 43-2, followed by 43-3, and so on. Primarily for the sake of simplification of policy making, in early August 1943 the WAFS and the WFTD were consolidated by the AAF into the Women Airforce Service Pilots, or WASP. Jacqueline Cochran became their Director and Nancy Love became the Executive of Women Pilots in the Air Transport Command. The accession of Cochran exacerbated some of the negative feelings that existed between supporters of the refined Love and the determined Cochran; this conflict will be looked at in more detail in chapter four. For the remainder of this study, unless specifically referring to the WAFS, all of the women pilots will be referred to as WASPs, despite the fact the name was not used until August 1943. By December 1944, only sixteen months after they were brought together, the experiment

of women flying for the Army Air Force was ended. The WASP were disbanded and the women were sent home. Some of the reasons for their demise were directly related to the general push to remove women from the work force as the war came to a close.

Several historians have looked at the role American women played during World War II as volunteers, workers and members of the military. Others have noted the changes in attitudes about women in these roles in the post-war years. In his *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1979*, William Chafe argues that the war was a watershed for women and that it permanently expanded the role women, particularly married women, were able to play in the work force.²³ Many historians have since contradicted Chafe's conclusion. Leila J. Rupp, author of *Mobilizing Women for War, German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945*, contends that the increased role of women in the workforce was not permanent. She charges that "it is clear that the wartime changes expanded the options of women in a way intended by the propagandists as temporary."²⁴ More importantly, Rupp explains that the acceptable public image of women expanded during the war only because it was necessary, but that "the wartime range of options would contract once again in peacetime."²⁵ Rupp's conclusions that the acceptable public image of women was not permanently changed by the war are supported by other historians.

D'Ann Campbell, for instance, supports Rupp's arguments in her book *Women at War With America*. Campbell argues that the American government had to use massive propaganda to get women into the military and factories, and that despite their effort they

²³ William Henry Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1979* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 176.

²⁴ Leila Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 175.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

were still short of their goals. According to Campbell, this was due to the fact that American society did not or could not accept the dramatic changes in women's roles.²⁶ Maureen Honey analyzes wartime fiction, advertising and propaganda in her book *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda during World War II*. Honey wanted to discover why women shifted from the strong Rosie the Riveter model to the "naive, dependent, childlike, self-abnegating model of femininity in the late forties and 1950s."²⁷ Honey analyzes the different tactics the government used and their effectiveness in recruiting women to work, as well as their effectiveness in pushing the women back into the home after the war.

According to Honey, the government used propaganda throughout the war to emphasize the nuclear family. She argues that the nuclear family was presented, and seen, as representative of "the survival of decency and humanity in a world rent by suffering."²⁸ This image grew stronger as the war began drawing to a close, and women were "idealized as healers who would salve men's wounds while nurturing the generation that would harvest the rich fruit of postwar prosperity."²⁹ Honey's contentions agree with both Rupp's and Campbell's suggestions that American women, particularly married women, were never intended to hold jobs permanently once the crisis of war had passed.

Doris Weatherford extensively discusses the role women played during World War II in her book, *American Women and World War II*. Weatherford discusses the fears of another economic depression as the war began to wind to a close, and cites titles of magazine articles such as "Getting Rid of the Women", "Watch Out for the Women", and

²⁶ D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War With America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 14.

²⁷ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 2.

²⁸ Ibid., 216.

²⁹ Ibid., 216.

"Give Back the Jobs", as representative of attitudes of the times.³⁰ All of the historians agree that thousands of American women were mobilized to participate in the war effort through massive propaganda campaigns and an appeal to patriotism. Although not as obvious, propaganda campaigns also pushed for the women to return home as the war came to a close. This propaganda, as well as fears of a postwar depression, played a role in the disbandment of the Women Airforce Service Pilots.

A number of works addressing the WASPs have been completed in the past two decades. Secondary sources concerning the WASP include two master's theses and several aviation history books. The first thesis was Natalie Stewart-Smith's work from 1981, *The Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) of World War II: Perspectives on the Work of America's First Military Women Aviators*. Stewart-Smith investigates how the WASPs were viewed by the military and the public, and how the women viewed their own role especially while in training.³¹ The second thesis examined was Gabrielle Marie Everett's work from 1995, *The Women Airforce Service Pilots: A Comparative Analysis of Class 43-W-1 and 44-W-10*. Everett focuses on the changes of the WASP training program from the first to the last class.³² Both aided in finding additional sources and provided some information that was not otherwise available, namely Stewart-Smith's discussion of her interview with Cochran who is since deceased. Two general books about women in aviation are Deborah Douglas's *United States Women in Aviation, 1940-1985*, and Dean Jaros's *Heroes Without Legacy: American Airwomen, 1912-1944*.³³

³⁰ Weatherford, *American Women*, 306.

³¹ Natalie Stewart-Smith, *The Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) of World War II: Perspectives on the Work of America's First Military Women Aviators* (Master's Thesis, Washington State University, 1981).

³² Gabrielle Marie Everett, *The Women Airforce Service Pilots: A Comparative Analysis of Class 43-W-1 and 44-W-10* (Masters Thesis, Arkansas State University, 1995).

³³ Deborah Douglas, *United States Women in Aviation, 1940-1985* (Washington

Douglas's book is a general overview of women's activities in aviation and she dedicates one chapter to describing briefly the formation, activities and disbandment of the WASP. Jaros argues that the accomplishments of American women aviators, including the WASP, have been ignored and not followed up on for decades. He concludes that there are some indications that the lack of a legacy for these early aviators is changing.

Two major works solely dedicated to the WASP are Byrd Howell Granger's, *On Final Approach: The Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II*, and Sally VanWagenen Keil's, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II*.³⁴ Granger's *On Final Approach* is a massive attempt to teach a new generation about what happened during the war and with the WASP. Granger was a WASP herself, but did extensive research for her book. Unfortunately, it is nearly five hundred pages of stilted and speculative narrative. Her appendices, however, proved invaluable. Keil's *Wonderful Women* is a light narrative telling the story of the WASP. She does not use citations, but obviously did numerous interviews and a great deal of research. Keil's work is well-written and comes the closest to explaining who the WASP were and what they did to a general audience.

Investigation of the WASPs unveiled a substantial amount of primary sources concerning the topic. A number of the WASPs have recorded personal memoirs and two of the classes have put together short biographies of each of their members. Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas has an extensive collection of primary WASP materials and research in their archives led to a number of primary sources including oral

DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Dean Jaros, *Heroes Without Legacy: American Airwomen, 1912-1944* (CO: University Press of Colorado, 1993).

³⁴ Byrd Howell Granger, *On Final Approach: The Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (Scottsdale, AZ: Falconer Publishing Company, 1991); Sally VanWagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (NY: Four Directions Press, 1979).

histories, memoirs, newspapers and more. The two major primary sources for this study include personal interviews with surviving WASPs and questionnaires completed by surviving WASPs. Two official histories, one from the Army Air Force and the second from the Air Transport Command, were analyzed as well.³⁵ Although the evidence presented in the official reports is tainted, the reports provided a backdrop for the saga of the WASP. Corroborating evidence has been cited whenever possible. It should be noted that the *History of the Air Transport Command* utilized is a revised version that was created when officials discovered new evidence which revealed "numerous omissions and some errors of fact" in the original.³⁶ Additional primary sources analyzed included *Congressional Records* and newspaper and magazine articles from the period, in part to discover the tone of the press toward the women pilots. More recent newspaper and magazine articles about the WASPs reflected how they remembered their experiences, as well as how they hoped to be remembered by others.

Throughout their existence, from September 1942 to December 1944, the WASPs fulfilled a number of duties for the AAF. The women towed targets behind everything from the AT-6 Texan, an advanced trainer, to the four-engine bomber the B-17 Flying Fortress. They flew engineering test flights in which they test flew either new or newly repaired aircraft. The WASPs did administrative flying and trained bombardiers and navigators. This study only looks at one role of the women, that of ferry pilots for the Ferrying Division (FERD) in the Air Transport Command.

³⁵ CWO J. Merton England, AAF Historical Office, Headquarters, Army Air Forces, *Army Air Forces Historical Studies, No. 55: Women Pilots With the AAF, 1941-1944* (publisher unknown, March 1946); Captain Walter J. Marx, Ferrying Division Historical Officer, Historical Branch, Intelligence and Security Division, Headquarters, Air Transport Command, *History of the Air Transport Command: Women Pilots in the Air Transport Command* (publisher unknown, March 1945) Yvonne Pateman Collection, United States Air Force Academy, MS 31, Microfilm roll #8, A3003.

³⁶ Marx, *ATC History*, 1.

There are two major reasons to focus on the WASPs within the FERD. First, the women were initially brought into flying military planes for the sole purpose of ferrying aircraft for the FERD. The FERD utilized the women as pilots before any other part of the AAF, and fought the hardest to keep them when they were disbanded in December 1944, under the cry that they were needed. The second justification for focusing on the women in the FERD is that the women who were initially admitted to the FERD, the original WAFS, acted as guinea pigs for the AAF's experiment of utilizing women as pilots, proving that women were indeed physically and emotionally capable of flying military aircraft.

The WAFS, like the women of the ATA in Britain, were initially limited to flying light trainers. They slowly proved themselves and on April 17, 1943, the ATC ordered that the women could fly any aircraft they were capable of flying. This was a major turning point in the women's role as pilots. As the war progressed the AAF needed fewer training aircraft and more operational, combat aircraft. If the women had been limited to ferrying only light trainers they would have prevented the male cadets from gaining additional flight training as ferry pilots before they progressed to more advanced planes. The men ferried the light aircraft to gain essential cross-country experience before they went into combat. With the removal of limitations, the women advanced to operational aircraft which became more vital as the war progressed, and the women's program expanded. On April 24th the first class of WFTD's, class 43-1, graduated and joined the original WAFS in the FERD. The success of the WAFS in the FERD eased the way for the new women. From April 1943 to their disbandment in December 1944 the women progressed into advanced pursuit aircraft and, despite some controversy, proved that women could fly military aircraft.

The previous works dealing with the WASP are either anecdotal narratives or memoirs written by the women themselves. The academic work done on the WASP,

while helpful, is limited in its scope. This study investigates who the WASP were, their role in the Ferrying Division of the Air Transport Command, and why they were disbanded while the war was still in full force. The purpose of this study is to determine the degree to which the Women Airforce Service Pilots were effective pilots for the Army Air Force. The first step to answering that question is to understand who the women of the WASP were.

CHAPTER TWO

WHO WERE THE WASPS?

Knowing who the women of the WASPs were and what they were doing before the war is important to understanding the group as a whole. Analysis of their educational backgrounds, where they learned to fly, what they were doing before the war, and their motivations for joining the WASP, are all important to knowing these women. The numbers used in this analysis were put together from a variety of sources including personal interviews, questionnaires, memoirs and biographical sketches, gathered from one hundred twenty-one WASPs.

One important feature of the WASPs is that they were primarily Caucasian. Two Chinese-Americans, Maggie Gee of class 44-9, and Hazel Ying Lee of class 43-4, provided some racial diversity for the WASPs. As for Native Americans, Margaret Chamberlain Tamplin of class 44-3, is on the rolls of the Cherokee tribe, and Ola M. Rexroat is on the rolls for the Oglala band of the Lakota tribe, but neither woman is a full-blooded Native American.³⁷

There were no African-American women accepted into the WASP program, although at least one woman applied and was interviewed. Natalie Stewart-Smith learned through a 1978 interview with Jacqueline Cochran that Cochran interviewed an African-American woman and "explained to her the difficulties the program was having gaining military acceptance, and suggested that those problems would be compounded if Black women pilots were in the WFTD program."³⁸ Stewart-Smith continued, "Cochran did not

³⁷ Ola M. Rexroat, WASP Class 44-7, telephone interview by author, 3 February 1997; Margaret Chamberlain Tamplin, WASP Class 44-3, telephone interview by author, 3 February 1997.

³⁸ Stewart-Smith, *Perspectives*, 22.

refuse to accept the interviewee who was well-qualified, but following the interview the woman removed her name from consideration. The former applicant spoke to other Black women interested in the WFTD and no more applications were received from Black candidates."³⁹ The name of the applicant is not given; therefore, her side of the story cannot be told.

As for possible discrimination faced as a Chinese-American, Maggie Gee (44-9) did not remember any, but said "if they did that's when things brush off - you don't take those things seriously. I can't remember anything - nothing traumatic."⁴⁰ Her comments indicate that she may have experienced some discrimination, but considered it too insignificant to remember. Hazel Ying Lee was killed on November 23, 1944 when the P-63 she was ferrying and another plane collided while landing, so her experiences are unknown.⁴¹ WASP Kay Gott recently published a short book about Ying Lee and cited interviews and letters from WASPs who had known her. According to Gott, while Ying Lee was in WASP training in Sweetwater, Texas, she was voted "one of the best liked pilots on Avenger Field," the WASP training base.⁴² Although some of the women who wrote to Gott about Ying Lee admitted that although she was a beautiful person on the inside, she was not at all physically attractive, a few others disagreed and said she was very attractive. Photos of Ying Lee show a tall, thin, young woman pilot. It is possible that negative comments about her appearance were racially motivated, but all who wrote about her appeared to have genuinely enjoyed and cared for her. While it is impossible to know about Ying Lee's experiences as a Chinese-American in the WASP, all of the photos

³⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁰ Maggie Gee, WASP Class 44-9, interview by author, 5 October 1996, Anaheim, California, tape recording.

⁴¹ *In Memorium: Thirty-eight American Women Pilots*, (Denton, Texas: Texas Woman's University Press, 1996), 18.

⁴² Kay Gott, *Hazel Ah Ying Lee: Women Airforce Service Pilot*, (USA: Kay Gott, 1996), 29.

in Gott's book reveal a smiling and apparently happy, young woman, indicating that discrimination was probably not a regular experience.⁴³

Study of the educational background of the WASPs prior to their joining the organization indicates whether the group was composed of women who were better educated than women in the general population. One of the basic eligibility requirements of the WASPs was a high school diploma and so the minimum education of the women is known. Ninety WASPs answered questions about their pre-WASP educations. Seventy-nine of the ninety women (87.7%) had at least some college before the WASP. For the purposes of this study some college is defined as at least one year. Fifty-two of the women (57.7%) had at least their four year degree before joining the WASP, and nine (10%) had completed courses at the graduate level. In 1940 only 6.4% of the general white female population had some college (1-3 years) and only 4% of the same group had four or more years of college.⁴⁴ Although women of other organizations may have been better educated as well, the WASPs were substantially better educated than their peers in the general population. The fields these women studied ranged from home economics and physical education to bacteriology and engineering, with the majority of the women taking courses in the former rather than the latter fields.

Although a number of the women received scholarships and/or worked to put themselves through school, the high percentage of women attending college at the end of the Great Depression indicates that the majority of the WASPs were from middle or upper class backgrounds. It could also be an indicator that the families of these WASPs had somewhat forward thinking ideas about the role women could play in society. Many women of this era did not attend college because they and/or their families did not think it

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Bureau of Census, *Historical Studies of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Part 1* (Washington DC: US Department of Commerce, 1975), 380.

was necessary since they believed the primary role of a woman was as mother and wife. Co-ed colleges were still not the norm, and some women were exposed to prejudice against their sex while in school. Dawn Seymour (43-5) explained that when she was a student at Cornell University in the late 1930s many of the men's fraternities were so opposed to women attending the college that they forbade their members to date a co-ed. She reiterated that, overall, her experience at Cornell was wonderful, and that the department of home economics enabled her to feel as though she was attending a small women's college within a large university.⁴⁵ Obviously, although women attending college was becoming more acceptable in the 1930s and 1940s, it was still not accepted in all circles.

Although it is impossible to determine exactly the influence of their families on the women, they undoubtedly had an impact. The effect of an independent woman as a role model surely played a part in the attitudes of the WASPs. Of the women questioned for this study, only thirty-three discussed their mothers. Seventeen of the women's mothers (52%) worked outside of the home in a variety of occupations, although most fit within the socially acceptable jobs for women of that time. Some of the positions included teacher, nurse, farmer, secretary, and artist. With such a small number of women reporting on whether their mother worked outside of the home, it is difficult to know if the statistic of fifty-two percent would stay consistent with a larger study. The finding is much higher than the norm of only twenty-four percent of women in the work force (twenty-seven percent of females in the female population).⁴⁶ A majority of the women who discussed their families had their support and several claimed to have had non-

⁴⁵ Dawn Seymour, WASP Class 43-5, interview with author, 5 October 1996, Anaheim, California, tape recording.

⁴⁶ Eugenia Kaledin, *Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 63; Rosalyn Baxandall, Linda Gordon, Susan Reverby, eds., *America's Working Women* (NY: Random House Books, 1976).

traditional parents. Dawn Seymour's mother was a musician who, before she married and became pregnant with her first child Dawn, traveled all over the United States with her sisters in a group sponsored in part by the University of Chicago, playing music and "bringing culture to the hinterland". Seymour exclaimed that, thanks to her parents, she was born into a life of adventure.⁴⁷

Violet Cowden's (43-4) mother was a great friend to her. Cowden depicted growing up as going dancing and horseback riding with her mother and said that her mother was "just real full of fun."⁴⁸ Faith Buchner Richards (43-4), whose mother was a college English professor, said her mother wanted to raise her to be independent.⁴⁹ Tex Brown Meachem (43-7) recounted that her mother had always told her she could do whatever she wanted, and was somewhat adventurous herself. Meachem recalled that upon learning she was admitted to the WASP, her mother told her to be the "best damn pilot in the Air Force."⁵⁰

Several of the WASPs reported that their mothers were not completely supportive, but the most extreme example was provided by Elaine Harmon (44-9). Harmon described her mother as "quite old fashioned and very family oriented", then admitted that her mother did not speak to her when she joined and was part of the WASP, primarily because, as Harmon explains, her mother was embarrassed because flying airplanes was so unladylike. Harmon's husband was going overseas and suggested that she join the WASP, clearly indicating that at least he was supportive.⁵¹ The comments many of these women

⁴⁷ Seymour, interview with author, 5 October 1996.

⁴⁸ Violet Cowden, WASP Class 43-4, interview with author, 4 August 1996, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, tape recording.

⁴⁹ Faith Buchner Richards, WASP Class 43-4, interview with author, 4 August 1996, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, tape recording.

⁵⁰ Tex Brown Meachem, WASP Class 43-7, interview with author, 3 October 1996, Anaheim, California, tape recording.

⁵¹ Elaine Harmon, WASP Class 44-9, interview with author, 19 July 1996,

made about their families do not permit a firm conclusion, but perhaps they, along with the high number who attended college, allow a safe assumption that the majority of these women had supportive and, for the times, somewhat liberal thinking parents.

Flying was an activity limited primarily to the wealthy, the brave, or the lucky until December 1938, when the opportunity to learn to fly was opened to thousands of Americans, including a number of future WASPs. At that time Robert Hinkley, the head administrator of the Civil Aeronautics Authority (C.A.A.), the precursor of today's F.A.A., initiated the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP or CPT). Hinkley saw the program as an opportunity to increase the number of pilots in the United States who might later be used for national defense, but the isolationist Congress would not have funded a program with such a narrow purpose. As a result, the "CPTP was billed as a civilian program open to young men and women as a way of stimulating civilian aircraft sales in the faltering American aviation industry."⁵²

The CPTP became a part of over 435 colleges with the schools providing ground courses such as aerodynamics, meteorology, air regulations and basic mechanics, and local flight operators providing the thirty-five to fifty hours of flight training. Women were allowed into the program, although limited to a ratio of one for every ten male students, and their inclusion was considered experimental. According to Deborah Douglas, the attitude of the CPTP toward women was "based on the premise that women made most of the important financial decisions in a household, and thus could have a substantial impact on the aviation sales market. For example, a woman who knew about aviation would be supportive of a pilot husband who wanted to buy an airplane."⁵³ The CPTP program was

Dayton, Ohio, tape recording.

⁵² Douglas, *United States Women*, 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

successful in creating new pilots with the federal government paying for the training.

After the first year there were already approximately 980 new male and female pilots.⁵⁴

The opportunity for women to learn to fly at the government's expense was short-lived. As the United States moved closer to war, the CPTP began to take its role as training future military pilots more seriously, and in early 1941 all trainees had to sign "non-binding agreements to serve in the military in case of war or national emergency."⁵⁵ By June 1941, the agreements became legal obligations to join the service and women were immediately excluded from joining the CPTP. When many women protested this action they each received a letter from Robert Hinkley which stated: "If, or when, the time comes when trained girls are needed in non-combat work to release men for active duty, that will be a different situation."⁵⁶ C.A.A. officials responded to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's complaints about their actions with a letter explaining that, "it is generally recognized that male pilots have a wider and more varied potential usefulness to the armed forces than female pilots," and maintained that they were acting accordingly.⁵⁷

Although the admission of women into the CPTP ended too soon for many women to take advantage of the opportunity, a number of WASPs were among the few who did get through the program. Of the eighty-one WASPs who described how they learned to fly, thirty-six (44%) definitely learned to fly through the CPTP. Twenty-one of the CPTP women (60%) were WAFS or graduated from the WFTD program in 1943. Eight of the women graduated with the first class in 1944, class 44-1. In other words, nearly eighty-three percent of the women who are known to have learned to fly in the CPTP were either the original WAFS or from the first nine out of the eighteen WASP classes. This can be

⁵⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 7.

explained by the early end to the CPTP for women, and the increasingly younger WASPs as the age limit was lowered.

Originally the women were required to be between twenty-one and thirty-five years of age. The AAF's male flying cadets were between eighteen and twenty-six years old, and "experience was clearly to the effect that the best pilot material was to be found in this age group."⁵⁸ In August 1943, the age limit for the women was reduced to eighteen and one-half years. In her *Final Report on Women Pilot Program*, Jacqueline Cochran explained that despite the thirty-five year old upper limit, "in the selection of candidates, few were taken over 26 years of age."⁵⁹ She argued that "the finest material for pilot training, speaking generally, was to be found in the lower age brackets."⁶⁰ Cochran broke down the ages of the 1,102 WASPs who were eventually assigned to operational duties as follows: twenty-one or under, twenty-nine percent; twenty-two to twenty-seven inclusive, fifty-seven percent; twenty-eight to thirty-two inclusive, eleven percent; and over thirty-two, three percent.⁶¹

Cochran continued with a table depicting the graduation rate of all 1,066 women trainees in 1944, which reveals a dramatic drop in success of the older women. Seventy-three percent of the eighteen to twenty year old trainees graduated, and sixty percent of the twenty-one to twenty-five year olds graduated. Only forty-one percent of the twenty-six to thirty year old trainees graduated, and a shockingly low twenty-five percent of the thirty-one to thirty-five year olds successfully completed the training program. While only twenty-two and twenty-eight percent of the two younger age groups were eliminated from

⁵⁸ Jacqueline Cochran, *Final Report on Women Pilot Program*, 1945, Byrd Granger Collection, Box 4, WASP Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas, 10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

the program for flying deficiency, forty-two and fifty-four percent of the older two age groups were eliminated for the same reason. Katherine Landry Steele (43-7) was twenty-four and had lived on her own for several years when she entered the WASP program. She described the WASP training as a "girl scout camp" because the women were forced to live together in barracks and had to march everywhere together, never as individuals. Steele speculated that most of the washouts were the "older girls", as supported by the evidence, who "just couldn't take that crap."⁶² The training program was run in a strict military fashion, so Steele's argument may be valid for some of the women. Another possibility is that the military required a more precise style of flying than was required in general aviation and the older women may not have been willing and/or able to adjust their flying style. Cochran did not express an opinion on why the older women were not as successful, but for the purposes of this study, the main importance of her evaluation is that the average age of all trainees at the time of induction was twenty-four years old, thus providing an age to the face of the average WASP.⁶³

Taking into account that the majority of the women had been out of school and/or independent for some time before they joined the WASP, it is not surprising that of the seventy-six who discussed their work status before the WASP, seventy-two (94.7%) were employed outside of the home. Thirty (41.6%) of the working women were clearly working in war-related or aviation-related jobs. These statistics appear to indicate that the WASP was made up of independent working women, but this may not be an accurate assessment. Women who were not working before the WASP may not have believed it was important to mention that they were not working, and so are not a part of the survey. Some of the women may have entered the WASP directly after graduating high school or

⁶² Katherine Landry Steele, WASP Class 43-7, interview with author, 19 July 1996, Dayton, Ohio, tape recording.

⁶³ Cochran, *Final Report*, 14.

college, or may have been married housewives. Of the forty women who mentioned their marital status, three were married before or during their WASP service, while twenty-four were married after the WASP, many within months of disbandment. Some of the married women had children under age fourteen, but accurate numbers on both marital status upon entering the WASP and possible dependents, are not available.⁶⁴ In a 1975 interview Leoti Deaton, Chief Establishment Officer for the WASP, essentially the head administrator of the program, revealed that an office fire destroyed all of the personnel records of the WASP. Deaton had on record all the pertinent information, including what they were doing before the WASP, of every woman who had entered the program. Regrettably, all was lost. Deaton also reported that the daily records of the women, including demerits and, if they left the program, their reasons for leaving, were thrown away by the Red Cross which had been storing them.⁶⁵ Despite the lack of primary records, perhaps it is safe to assume that at least fifty-nine percent (72 out of 121 women) of the women were working before they joined the WASP. This was a much higher percentage than the twenty-four percent of women in the general population who were part of the workforce.⁶⁶

The jobs these women held before the WASP were diverse. A few of the women were flight instructors and a few more operated the simulators used to train Army and Navy pilots. Some women worked in the offices of a variety of businesses and several of the women were teachers of everything from meteorology to history. A few were

⁶⁴ Congress, House, AAF General Henry H. Arnold testifying in favor of H.R. 4219, *Hearings Before the Committee On Military Affairs; On H.R. 4219*, 78th Congress, 2nd Session, 22 March 1944. (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1944) 4.

⁶⁵ Leoti Deaton, WASP Chief Establishment Officer, interview by Ziggy Hunter, March 15, 1975, transcript, Dawn Letson, editor, 1995, WASP Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

⁶⁶ Eugenia Kaledin, *Mothers and More*, 63.

parachute riggers, a couple were engineering draftsmen, one was an inspector at a defense plant, and at least two were professional dancers. If so many of these women were working or in school, why did they apply to join the WASPs, give up their good war-time wages, and endure the rigorous military training with none of the military benefits?

In September 1942, ninety women received the following telegram imploring them to apply for the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS):

*FERRYING DIVISION AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND IS ESTABLISHING
GROUP OF WOMEN PILOTS FOR DOMESTIC FERRYING STOP
NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS ARE HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION
AGE BETWEEN TWENTY ONE AND THIRTY FIVE COMMERCIAL
LICENSE FIVE HUNDRED HOURS TWO HUNDRED HORSEPOWER
RATING STOP ADVISE COMMANDING OFFICER SECOND FERRYING
GROUP FERRYING DIVISION AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND NEWCASTLE
COUNTY AIRPORT WILMINGTON DELAWARE IF YOU ARE IMMEDIATELY
AVAILABLE AND CAN REPORT AT ONCE AT WILMINGTON AT YOUR
OWN EXPENSE FOR INTERVIEW AND FLIGHT CHECK STOP BRING
TWO LETTERS RECOMMENDATION PROOF OF EDUCATION AND
FLYING TIME STOP BAKER END*

*GEORGE ARNOLD
COMMANDING GENERAL ARMY AIR FORCES WASHINGTON*⁶⁷

The women who received and responded to this telegram had a high number of flight hours, and many were flying for a living. The motivation for most was simple, as Teresa James (WAFS) explained, "I felt I could contribute to the war effort."⁶⁸ Another WAF, Cornelia Fort, wrote in an article shortly before she was killed, "I, for one, am profoundly grateful that my one talent, my only knowledge, flying, happens to be of use to my country when it is needed. That's all the luck I ever hope to have."⁶⁹ Patriotism and an effort to do what they could for their nation with the skills they possessed were primary motivators

⁶⁷ Jan Churchill, *On Wings to War: Teresa James, Aviator* (KS: Sunflower University Press, 1992), 31.

⁶⁸ Churchill, *Wings to War*, 33.

⁶⁹ Fort, "Twilight", 13.

for these women. The WAFS were highly skilled pilots and they believed that they were called to action by their country.

Many of the women who entered Cochran's WFTD were called to duty as well. Cochran and her staff gained access to C.A.A. records and sent long telegrams to women whom they believed met the necessary qualifications. These women were required to pay their own way to meet with Cochran or one of her staff for a personal interview, and had to pass an Army physical examination, the same one used for male combat pilots. Still, they responded quickly and positively because of their patriotism and the opportunity to use their skills. Others sought out the WASP once they learned of it, with some 25,000 women applying to join. Only 1,830 women were accepted and 1,074 eventually became WASPs, but they joined for much the same reasons. Caro Bayley Bosca (43-7) said her "motivation came in wanting to do something for the war effort - if I had not loved flying so I would have done something else for the war effort, and since this program opened up I would have volunteered for free."⁷⁰ Anna M. Logan Frenzel (44-1) explained, "the WAR was on, I couldn't knit and it seemed the right thing to do. People all around were joining the service in some capacity."⁷¹

Faith Buchner Richards (43-4) had been about to sign up for the Marines when the recruiter told her not to because women were going to be able to fly. Richards waited and joined one of the earliest classes.⁷² Also in class 43-4, Mary Edith Engle believed "that it was my duty and in addition I loved to fly."⁷³ Several of the women who were asked about their motivation to join named in addition to patriotism and a desire to fly,

⁷⁰ Caro Bayley Bosca, questionnaire, 26 June 1996, in author's possession.

⁷¹ Anna M. Logan Frenzel, questionnaire, 18 October 1996, in author's possession.

⁷² Richards, interview by author, 4 August 1996.

⁷³ Mary Edith Engle, questionnaire, 25 August 1996, in author's possession.

particularly military aircraft, a "love of adventure."⁷⁴ Another reason some of the women joined, which correlates with helping the war effort only on a more personal level, was the desire to replace or help a husband or brother. Margaret Tamplin (44-3) explained that "my brother was in the air corps fighting in the South Pacific and I needed to get more involved."⁷⁵ Elaine Harmon's (44-9) husband was overseas as was Clarice Siddall Bergemann's (44-2) brother.⁷⁶ When many of these women declared that they were doing their part for the war effort, they very often had someone close to them in mind.

To summarize, the women who were to become the WASPs were from diverse backgrounds, but they had many similarities. More than eighty-seven percent of the women had at least some college before they joined the WASP and well over half of them had four year degrees at a time when women attending college was not the norm. Less than half of the women were able to take advantage of the government's CPTP; therefore most of the women learned to fly by paying from their own or their families' pockets. Several of the women told stories of spending more than half of their weekly pay on their flying lessons. Supportive families were a necessity in order for most of these women to reach their goal of becoming a pilot. At least one parent appears to have approved of nearly all of these women's uncommon pursuits.

For the most part, these women were young, primarily in their mid-twenties, and in the middle of the greatest adventure of their lives. Over half of these women worked before they joined the WASPs, some loving their jobs and others working only to pay for their flight lessons or rent. Several of the WASPs were married before they joined, and

⁷⁴ Marion Foster Stegeman Hodgson, questionnaire, 6 November 1996, in author's possession.

⁷⁵ Margaret Chamberlain Tamplin, questionnaire, 10 October 1996, in author's possession.

⁷⁶ Elaine Harmon, questionnaire, 20 July 1996, in author's possession; Clarice Siddall Bergemann, questionnaire, 15 September 1996, in author's possession.

many married while they were in service. A few of the women had children when they joined the WASP, but they allowed their sense of duty and patriotism to pull them away from their homes.

The motivation for most of these women was a desire to do their part in the war effort. As one of the women stated, the most common phrase of the time was "don't you know there's a war on?".⁷⁷ Many of the WASPs understood that and wanted to do their part whether for the nation as a whole or simply to help bring home their husband or brother all that much sooner. The common thread that ran through every one of these women was the desire to fly. They simply loved to fly and made whatever sacrifices they needed to be able to get in the air. During her interview to be admitted into the WASP, Violet Cowden was asked how badly she wanted to get into the program. Her response was, "if you ask me to scrub your house with a toothbrush, I would do it."⁷⁸ Cowden was not alone.

Just as the women of the WASP were diverse, so were the duties of the WASP. The duties of the women in the Ferrying Division (FERD) changed a great deal during the experiment of women flying for the AAF. The first stage of the story of women pilots is primarily the WAFS from September 1942 to when they were joined by the first WFTD graduates in April 1943. The WAFS faced limitations on the aircraft they were allowed to fly and constantly had to prove their abilities. Knowing what these pioneers did and how they were perceived is important to getting a clearer picture of the WASPs as a whole.

⁷⁷ Eleanor Gunderson, WASP Class 44-7, interview by author, 20 July 1996, Dayton, Ohio, tape recording.

⁷⁸ Cowden, interview by author, 4 August 1996.

CHAPTER THREE

IN THE BEGINNING: THE WAFS, SEPTEMBER 1942-APRIL 1943

The first group of women to fly for the Army Air Force, the WAFS, set out to do their part to help their nation in its time of need and to prove that women were capable of flying military aircraft. The activities of the WAFS in the Ferrying Division (FERD) expanded from their beginning in September 1942 to when they were joined by the WFTD graduates in April 1943. The experimental nature of the program provided both opportunities and hindrances for the women. As they proved their competence as pilots, they were trusted with more complex aircraft, and eventually would be allowed to fly nearly any plane they were capable of flying.

As noted in chapter two, the qualifications for the original WAFS were very high. The women had to be high school graduates, between twenty-five and thirty-five years old, hold a commercial pilot's license, have at least five hundred flight hours, and hold a certificate showing that they were capable of flying planes with two hundred horsepower engines. In addition, the women had to supply two letters of recommendation and proof of their flight time. The men who were hired by the Ferrying Division of the Air Transport Command as civilian ferry pilots had lower qualifications. The men had to be between nineteen and forty-five years old, have finished three years of high school, and have at least two hundred flight hours. The head of the WAFS, Nancy Love, apparently made the women's qualifications tougher because she "recognized that her pilots would be scrutinized" as they were considered for militarization.⁷⁹ Love herself was a highly qualified commercial pilot and envisioned an elite group of women pilots aiding in the war

⁷⁹ Douglas, *United States Women*, 42.

effort. She proposed that the women be paid a salary of \$250 per month, \$130 less than the men civilian pilots, apparently because the women would be flying only trainer and liaison-type aircraft.⁸⁰ Love's later actions to expand the types of aircraft the women could fly indicate that she believed these to be "foot-in-the-door," temporary measures. The fact that Love accepted the inequalities indicates that the women believed this was their best opportunity to prove themselves as capable pilots. It must be remembered that only a few years before the WAFS began, women were considered "too high strung for war-time flying."⁸¹ The WAFS had a great deal to prove, and they were fully aware of their responsibility to other women pilots.

Upon arriving at Wilmington in early September 1942, Teresa James said a short prayer, "whereas, they have decided to let us try, be it resolved that come hell, high water, and insulting criticism, we will not let Washington down. Amen."⁸² Cornelia Fort recognized the pressure as well. "All of us realized what a spot we were in. We had to deliver the goods - or else," she said "or else there wouldn't ever be another chance for women pilots in any part of the service."⁸³ In keeping with their experimental status, after the initial announcement of the creation of the WAFS by Secretary of War Henry Stimson all publicity on the WAFS ceased as they began ferrying planes across the nation. Few Americans knew women were flying military aircraft, and despite their uniforms they were often mistaken as WAACS, Girl Scouts, and even once as a member of the Mexican Army.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁸¹ Sally VanWagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines*, (NY: Four Directions Press, 1979), 51.

⁸² Churchill, *Wings to War*, 44.

⁸³ Fort, "Twilight", 13.

⁸⁴ Keil, *Wonderful Women*, 134.

The lack of publicity is supported by the fact that the only news of the WAFS dated before April 1943 is one small article concerned the activities of a former national swimming champion who was flying for the WAFS.⁸⁵ Examination of the *Reader's Guide to Periodicals*, the *New York Times Index* and other sources revealed no other mention of the WAFS. The lack of publicity can be explained as a safety mechanism for the AAF. If the women failed, as some expected they would and others hoped they wouldn't, the bad publicity would not be as severe. By December 1942, the twenty-five original WAFS were actively ferrying for the FERD. The average flight time of the first thirteen women was over twelve hundred hours (see appendix 2).⁸⁶ These highly experienced pilots carefully flew the trainers and liaison aircraft with the weight of the future of all women pilots on their shoulders.

The first WAFS began to ferry for the FERD October 20, 1942. Despite their numerous flight hours and their 200 horsepower rating, they were limited to light trainers and liaison aircraft because the AAF commanders were uncertain whether women could safely fly heavier military aircraft. According to WAF Kathryn Bernheim Fine,

all ferry pilots, male and female alike, had to follow strict flight rules when flying ferrying missions. These rules included: maintain a minimum separation of 800 feet between each airplane; no flying at night; no flying above 12,000 feet; and no more than 84 hours of flight time per month.⁸⁷

The women followed the rules and kept busy flying. For example, WAF Barbara Poole ferried planes approximately four hundred hours within the first nine months of the

⁸⁵ "New Ferry Corp for Women," *New York Times*, 16 January 1943, p. 8.

⁸⁶ Marx, *ATC History*, 30-31.

⁸⁷ Kathryn Bernheim Fine and Sam Parker, "What's All the Fuss About? My WAFS/WASP Flying Experience," *American Aviation Historical Society* (summer 1995): 152.

program.⁸⁸ Despite their successful flying, the women still had to deal with sometimes unfair military orders.

In October 1942 a directive was issued to the WAFS from the 2nd Ferrying Group. The directive ordered all WAFS to return to the base from ferrying flights via commercial aircraft unless they were provided military aircraft specifically for their return. It warned the WAFS that "under no circumstances were they to endeavor to secure rides on the return trip from any Army Air Base or station."⁸⁹ The directive continued that "the primary purpose of the WAFS is the delivery of training type and liaison type aircraft..." and the women were reminded that "this work would require the full time of every member of the Squadron, and consequently there would be no chance for joyriding in other types of aircraft assigned to the base."⁹⁰ The men pilots often returned to base via other military aircraft. Captain Walter Marx, the official Air Transport Command historian, argued that the directives limiting the women were primarily to avoid the risk of scandalous publicity, and cited an interview with Nancy Love as evidence that she supported most of the limitations. No other documentation concerning the reasons for the restrictions is available, and again there was no national publicity about the WAFS during this time.

The FERD could have been sincere in its reasons for limiting the amount of flying the WAFS did with male pilots. About the same time these directives were issued, Jacqueline Cochran was beginning her flight school to train additional women pilots for the AAF, the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD), and she was even stricter about limiting the contact between the women pilots and men. Cochran was determined that no hint of scandal would hurt her program. In an article about the training program,

⁸⁸ Barbara E. Poole, "Requiem for the WASP," *Flying*, December 1944, 56.

⁸⁹ Marx, *ATC History*, 73.

⁹⁰ Marx, *ATC History*, 74.

Harold Newcomb reported that "to avoid even a hint of scandal that might damage the program, the women lived in a cloistered atmosphere at Avenger Field," in Sweetwater, Texas. The training school came to be called "Cochran's Convent" by the women and the male pilots who attempted to visit them.⁹¹ This tight control at the training school complemented the efforts of Love and the FERD to limit the women's exposure to scandal in a continuing effort to prevent controversy concerning the experiment of women pilots. On November 16, 1942, the first class, 43-1, arrived in Houston to begin training. The qualifications for this first group were much lower than the for WAFS, but the women were still experienced pilots. They had an average of 350 flight hours, well over the 200 hour requirement.⁹² While the WFTDs were learning to fly the Army way, the WAFS began expanding their role within the FERD.

It is evident that even fairly early in the experiment the AAF commanders saw the WAFS as capable pilots. Originally the WAFS worked out of only one base, the 2nd Ferrying Group in Wilmington, Delaware. By December 1942, the WAFS were moved to other bases to be available to ferry aircraft where they were most needed. WAFS joined the 6th Ferrying Group in Long Beach, California; the 5th Ferrying Group in Dallas, Texas; and the 3rd Ferrying Group in Romulus (Wayne County), Michigan. According to the *Army Air Force Historical Study No. 55*, "Mrs. Love and some of the other women pilots were dissatisfied because they were restricted at Wilmington to ferrying elementary types of planes."⁹³ Although no evidence has been found to support this conclusion, the experience level of these women was sufficient enough to assume that they quite easily could have become bored and frustrated flying only the simple trainer aircraft. This

⁹¹ SMSgt. Harold Newcomb, "Cochran's Convent," *Airman* 21, no. 5 (May 1977): 19.

⁹² Keil, *Wonderful Women*, 45.

⁹³ England, *AAF No. 55*, 39.

reinforces the idea that although Love agreed to the limitations originally placed on the women, she fully expected them to be upgraded to more sophisticated aircraft once they had proven their abilities. Love left Wilmington in January 1943, to join the new WAFS squadron at Dallas. The women were still limited to flying light primary trainers, but in her first month at Dallas, Love flew an AT-6, an advanced trainer, and was soon followed by the other WAFS in more basic trainers. Over the next few months the commanders of their bases slowly allowed the women to upgrade to advanced trainers, including the AT-6, AT-17, and the AT-19. The opportunities to upgrade to flying more advanced planes were yet another sign of the growing confidence the Ferrying Division had in their women pilots.

In February 1943, Love got the opportunity to fly a P-51, one of the newest and hottest pursuit aircraft of the time, capable of flying 440 miles per hour. Not long after, Love and Barbara Erickson ferried a C-47, known domestically as the DC-3, a twin-engine cargo plane, from Erickson's base in Long Beach, California. Also in February, Betty Gillies, second-in-command in the WAFS and squadron leader in Wilmington, flew a P-47, another hot pursuit aircraft. The official Army Air Force history reported that apparently Gillies was allowed to check-out in the P-47 because Love had informed the commanding officer at Wilmington that she transferred off of his base due to the lack of transition training into more sophisticated aircraft, and perhaps he did not want to lose Gillies too. In March, Love requested and was approved for transfer from Dallas to Long Beach because of the greater opportunities to ferry pursuit and medium to heavy cargo planes at Long Beach.⁹⁴ Love checked out in sixteen different types of planes within one month of her arrival at Long Beach. She was quickly followed by other WAFS because "the Sixth Ferrying Group saw women simply as pilots, much needed to fly the vast

⁹⁴ Ibid., 39.

number of airplanes produced by the manufacturers it served."⁹⁵ Although the commanders at the different bases could and did make a difference in how much the WAFS were able to fly, the work load of each base differed as well. The Long Beach base was surrounded by numerous factories which were busily building new, sophisticated aircraft for the war. The Long Beach FERD base was responsible for getting the new planes to points of debarkation on the East Coast as quickly as possible. The high levels of productivity meant that Long Beach desperately needed competent pilots, and the commanding officers obviously did not care what sex the pilots were, as long as they delivered the planes quickly and safely. The WAFS were still officially limited to only trainer aircraft, but these few jumps into more sophisticated aircraft by the top women pilots were signs of more to come.

The women were proving themselves as competent pilots. One flight in early 1943 provided a clear example of their abilities and how, in one instance, they compared with their male counterparts. On a flight of twenty-three PT-17 open-cockpit Stearman biplanes from Great Falls, Montana to an air base in Tennessee, WAF Teresa James was made the flight leader, the person responsible for navigation. WAFS flew six of the Stearmans while male ferry pilots flew the remaining seventeen. After take-off in Great Falls the pilots scattered for the extended cross country flight. The planes began to land in Tennessee on the morning of the second day. All six of the WAFS landed safely on that second day, but only six of the seventeen male pilots had landed some two days later. Apparently some of the men had gotten lost, two had damaged their airplanes, and others were late after presumably paying visits along the way. The WAFS were proving to the Air Transport Command that they were efficient and capable pilots.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Keil, *Wonderful Women*, 242.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

The WAFS' safety record attested to their abilities as well. The WAFS' only accidents in 1942 came in November when a group of WAFS were flying the light-weight Piper Cubs, and attempted to land on a grass landing strip in Charlottesville, Virginia. Cornelia Fort and one other WAF landed on the field which they did not know was saturated from heavy rains the area had recently received. The wheels of the two cubs became stuck in the mud, and both of the planes nosed over. The propellers of the planes were broken, but neither woman was injured. The remaining women in the flight group landed without incident. Fort and the pilot of the other bogged-down plane waited in Charlottesville for a few days and then continued on to their original destination once the propellers had been repaired. The women were not blamed for the incident.⁹⁷

From that minor incident in November 1942 until March 1943, the women pilots were not involved in any accidents, despite the extensive number of hours they flew. On March 21, 1943 the WAFS experienced their first accident in five months and suffered their first fatality. Cornelia Fort, a highly experienced pilot with over 1,100 flight hours and the second woman to join the WAFS, was killed after a mid-air collision with another plane. Fort's biographer, Robert Simbeck, author of *The Daughter of the Air: The Short Soaring Life of Cornelia Fort*, forthcoming in August 1997, interviewed three members of the flight group in which she flew. According to the men involved, the group, six men and Fort, had been chatting about formation flying while waiting in a snack bar at the airport in Midland, Texas. According to one man, Louis Biggio, Fort was interested in trying the maneuver, which was strictly against the rules for all ferry pilots. Biggio admitted that he could not recall if Fort suggested the idea or if the group talked her into it. One member of the group, Frank Wiggins, said he was not interested in the formation flying and subsequently flew several hundred yards away from the group. The fact that Wiggins did

⁹⁷ Robert Simbeck, author of *The Daughter of the Air: The Short Soaring Life of Cornelia Fort*, telephone interview by author, 29 January 1997.

not participate indicates that if Fort had not been willing to join the group she could have flown off to the side, just as Wiggins had.⁹⁸

The group met at 7,000 feet in their BT-13 Vultee Vibrators, basic trainer aircraft, flying at approximately 140 miles per hour. The men told Fort to fly straight and level and that they would take turns flying at her wings. According to Biggio, "we were headed eastward, flying formation, changing position sometimes switching around from right wing to left wing - we were young and full of vinegar and none of us ever considered the possible consequences."⁹⁹ One hour into the flight, the landing gear on Frank Stamme's plane hit Fort's left wing tip and six feet of the leading edge of her wing peeled off. His gear apparently hit the canopy of her plane as well. In his official statement about the accident, Stamme reported that "in the split second that all of this happened, I noticed the pilot of the other ship had her left arm raised as if to ward off a blow or shield her face from something."¹⁰⁰ In other words, Fort saw it coming. None of the other pilots saw the impact, but it is assumed that Stamme was shifting position and misjudged the location of Fort's aircraft. Stamme was twenty-three years old and had only 267 hours of flying experience. He had been flying for less than a year.¹⁰¹

Although no one is certain, it is believed that Fort was either unconscious or already dead when her plane crashed. The plane did a series of rolls, entered an inverted dive and slammed into the ground. There was no evidence of any manipulation of the controls and Fort did not attempt to use her parachute. One fact that indicated she may have been alive and conscious at least for a short while after Stamme's plane hit hers was that witnesses on the ground reported that they did not hear the plane's engine as it fell.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ War Department, AAF, 6th Ferrying Group, Long Beach, CA, "Report of Aircraft Accident," 12 April 1943, in author's possession.

¹⁰¹ Simbeck, telephone interview by author, 29 January 1997.

Fort may have turned off the fuel flow to the engine to prevent burning in a fire upon impact. Perhaps because she was the first woman pilot to die and no policy had been established, Fort's mother received a Civil Service death benefit of \$250 to pay for her funeral. Fort's family was the only one out of those of the thirty-eight women who died flying for their country to receive any official benefits from the government. The official accident report listed the cause of the accident as "100% judgment" and a "momentary lapse of mental efficiency". In other words, the cause was pilot error. Fort's fatal accident did not have any obvious negative effects on the women's flying experiment. Simbeck revealed that his research indicated that Fort's accident did not deter the other women pilots from wanting to fly. They were saddened by her death, but they believed they had an important job to do.¹⁰² The FERD and ATC did not issue any directives against the women that could be directly tied to Fort's accident.

Due to the fact that women flying as military pilots was experimental in nature, extensive speculation and study of their physiology as pilots was undertaken by the AAF. Uncertainty concerning the effects of a woman's menstrual cycle on her ability to fly prompted the FERD to action. On March 29th 1943, FERD headquarters sent a letter to all Group Commanders ordering that "no woman pilot was to be assigned any flying duties during pregnancy," and that "at the time of a menstrual period she was not to fly from one day before the beginning of the period to two days after the last day of the period."¹⁰³ In other words, according to this directive, the each woman pilot could be grounded from six to eight days per month.¹⁰⁴ *The History of the Air Transport Command* argued that the directive was "in line with CAA rules governing women pilots, established as early as

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Marx, *ATC History*, 82.

¹⁰⁴ England, *AAF No. 55*, 41.

1940."¹⁰⁵ The *History* provided the following quote taken from the Civil Aeronautics Administration's *Handbook for Medical Examiners* dated July 1, 1940, as support for its case:

A history should be obtained from all women candidates of menstrual abnormalities, pregnancies, and miscarriages. All women should be cautioned that it is dangerous for them to fly within a period extending from 3 days prior to 3 days after the menstrual period. Many women pilots have fainted when flying during this period with fatal results. Pregnancy is a disqualifying condition for all grades.¹⁰⁶

The ATC Surgeon, while agreeing that the women should not fly while they were pregnant, argued that "the menstrual periods should be regarded as an individual problem and regulations should be made by the local WAFS leader."¹⁰⁷ The Air Surgeon agreed with the ATC Surgeon, and in the conclusion of the *Medical Consideration of WASPs*, a report completed when the WASP disbanded that was based on medical study of the WASP from the beginning of the program, they stated that menstruation "in properly selected women, is not a handicap to flying or dependable performance of duty."¹⁰⁸ The same medical report conceded that "in actual practice, it seems that several WAFS continued to fly for several months after the beginning of pregnancy and that it was not necessary to ground all women pilots for six to eight days every month because of the menstrual period."¹⁰⁹ Jacqueline Cochran corroborated these statements in her *Final Report*, and disclosed that the six women instructors at the training school lost less flight time than their male colleagues. Cochran also reported that the loss of flight time of

¹⁰⁵ Marx, *ATC History*, 83.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁰⁷ England, *AAF No. 55*, 41.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

women on operational duty due to menstrual problems was "negligible and in no degree an interference with the job."¹¹⁰

Although concerns such as these may seem somewhat ridiculous in an age when women spend months at a time in space, it is important to remember that when the WAFS began flying for the military, they truly were an experiment. The men of the AAF, the doctors included, were not quite sure how the women would react to flying sophisticated aircraft, or how the women should be treated. When Jean Terrell Moreo McCreery took her physical examination at Patterson Field in Dayton, Ohio to be admitted into the WASP, the doctor passed her but said, "well, it may be ok for you young women to go off to war but when it's over, just remember that a doctor at Patterson Field told you that you would have difficulty having children." McCreery became the mother of ten children after the war.¹¹¹ The point of this digression is that no one was quite sure what, if anything, would physiologically change if women climbed into the "cockpit" of military aircraft. The women's physical make-up and how they reacted to flying became part of the experiment.

The women were dispelling myths about inconsistency due to monthly cycles and were beginning to fly more high-powered aircraft at most bases. Despite their successes, on March 25th, the commander of the 3rd Ferrying Group at Romulus, Michigan ordered that WAFS from their base would only fly light trainer aircraft. The directive continued that the women "were not to be assigned as co-pilots on ferrying missions or to transition on any high-powered single-engine plane or on twin-engine aircraft." Also, supposedly to protect the morals of the young women, "they were to be assigned missions in individual

¹¹⁰ Cochran, *Final Report*, 37-38.

¹¹¹ Marguerite Jean Terrell Moreo McCreery, questionnaire, 12 August 1996, in author's possession.

flights and, so far as possible, deliveries on alternate days with male pilots. If at all possible they were to be sent in a different direction from any male flights."¹¹²

Why 3rd Ferrying Division commanders felt compelled to make such restrictive orders is not clear. The logistics of following such a directive would have been a nightmare, and would undoubtedly have led to a further limit on the number of hours the women out of Romulus were able to fly, removing an important pool of pilots from active duty. As for the likelihood of the directives being aimed at the women due to prejudice against women pilots, rumors that the women were not treated as well at Romulus as at other bases do exist, but no specific examples have been found for this study. In her book *Sisters in the Sky, Volume 1 WAFS*, Adela Riek Scharr, a WAF herself, only conveyed that the WAFS were welcomed by some and ignored by most when they arrived at Romulus. Scharr explained that Sis Bernheim, also a WAF, told her years after the war that they were the "darlings of the enlisted men. They'd do anything for us, not like some of those beardless lieutenants who thought we were in the service only to look for husbands."¹¹³ This statement indicates that there may have been some animosity from the male pilots and officers, but again, nothing specific. Louise Bowden Brown (43-4), who was one of the first graduates of the WFTD to be based out of Romulus, explained: "I don't remember any resentment from male pilots, but I do remember many who were proud of us, also officers and C.O.'s."¹¹⁴ The final report on the WASPs at Romulus, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter four, was filled with critical comments that clearly indicated a substantial bias against women pilots in general. The commanding

¹¹² Marx, *ATC History*, 74.

¹¹³ Adela Riek Scharr, *Sisters in the Sky: Volume I - The WAFS* (St. Louis: The Patrice Press, 1986), 349.

¹¹⁴ Louise Bowden Brown, questionnaire, 23 June 1996, in author's possession.

officers at Romulus may have hoped to ground their women pilots eventually by issuing the above directive, but the reaction to it was undoubtedly not what they had in mind.

On a copy of the Romulus directive held in the Ferrying Division files is the comment, penciled in by Colonel George D. Campbell the Director of Operations, stating "Mrs. Love objected to this directive."¹¹⁵ Love did more than simply object. Between the Romulus directive and the FERD's new limits on the times of the month women could fly, the women's flight activities were being severely restricted. Love made a personal appeal to ATC Headquarters and undoubtedly used the women's excellent flight record as well as her own and others' successful upgrade to more sophisticated aircraft as evidence of the women's abilities. The ATC apparently agreed with Love and on April 17th, the Chief of Staff (no name available in source) sent a letter to the FERD describing the new policies to be taken concerning the WAFS. Part of the letter stated:

It is the desire of this Command that all pilots, regardless of sex, be privileged to advance to the extent of their ability in keeping with the progress of aircraft development. Will you please ensure that the terms of this policy are carried out insofar as it applies to ferrying of aircraft within the continental U.S.A. ¹¹⁶

The FERD responded to the letter by rescinding its earlier directives and issuing a letter of new rules concerning the WAFS. The letter stated that "WAFS will be transitioned upon multi-engine aircraft or high-powered single-engine aircraft under the same standards of individual experience and ability as apply to any other pilot."¹¹⁷ The WAFS were still restricted from flying with male pilots "except during training", but delivery flights could be considered training flights when deemed as such prior to take off. "WAFS would not fly in formation and would keep at least 500 feet away from all other

¹¹⁵ England, *AAF No. 55*, 40.

¹¹⁶ Marx, *ATC History*, 85-86.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

aircraft at all times when in flight."¹¹⁸ Again, no ferry pilots were allowed to fly in formation, but this reminder may have come as a result of Fort's fatal accident. The failure of the Romulus directive is further evidence that the women were proving their abilities as effective and capable pilots.

The safe flying of the WAFS, while unquestionably a major reason for the ATC and FERD change of heart, was not the only factor that encouraged the policy changes. In the spring of 1943, the FERD became part of the AAF training system. The AAF utilized the FERD as part of the more advanced stages of training their combat pilots. The male pilots would first ferry light planes and then more advanced planes to gain experience with the aircraft, particularly the vital cross-country experience, before entering combat. As the number of pilots needed for combat increased, any slow down in their training would be detrimental to the Allied cause. If the women were restricted to ferrying only trainers and other light aircraft, the number of planes available for the men to fly would be limited and there would be a blockage in the training cycle. By allowing the women to progress to the most advanced aircraft they were able to fly, there would be no blockage, the combat pilots would be trained, and the planes would be delivered.

The decisions concerning the WAFS were made just as the first class of the WFTD was about to graduate. If the original WAFS had not had a safe and efficient flight record when the decision time arrived, there is little doubt that the experiment of women pilots would have been ended. No one was about to risk the training of male combat pilots simply so women could ferry trainers. The FERD decision in April 1943 to expand the duties of the WAFS to ferrying more advanced planes was a major turning point in the experiment of women flying for the AAF. The WAFS proved that women were capable

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 86.

of safely flying military aircraft and held open the door for the women who had completed military training and were ready to prove they could fly too.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE EXPERIMENT CONTINUES:
THE WASPS, APRIL 1943 TO DECEMBER 1944

The experiment with women as military pilots began a major expansion in April 1943. The WAFS were finally allowed to fly whatever planes they were capable of flying, and the women of Cochran's training school, the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD), began to graduate and join the WAFS flying for the Ferrying Division (FERD). By late summer the WFTD and WAFS would merge, creating the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), and many of the women would serve in other branches of the Army Air Force. The women who joined and remained in the FERD were given more responsibilities and opportunities to fly more sophisticated aircraft. This chapter describes the consolidation of the WFTDs and the WAFS into the WASP, as well as what the women pilots did from April 1943 to WASP disbandment in December 1944. It also includes analysis of evaluations made of the WASPs throughout their service in the FERD and upon disbandment. This analysis will help determine the degree to which the WASPs were effective pilots for the Ferrying Division of the Air Transport Command.

On April 24, 1943 WFTD class 43-1 finally graduated. With their graduation came an immediate shift in the "no publicity" policy followed by Jacqueline Cochran and the Air Transport Command. Cochran's women had made it through the strict military training, and it was time to show them off. The April 28th *New York Times* contained an article titled "Women Learning to Be Army Pilots To Relieve Men in Ferry Command, Hundreds Now in Training in West Texas...." The large picture above the article showed Cochran surrounded by at least twenty-three women pilots in the ready room at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas. The article explained that "there will be thousands of women in the program...." and described a typical day in the life of a trainee. The new requirements for

recruits, including the lower required flight time (down to only thirty-five hours), were also a part of the article.¹¹⁹

After their graduation ceremony, the women received a short leave and then joined the WAFS already flying for the FERD. Six women were assigned to each base: the 2nd Ferrying Group in Wilmington, Delaware; the 3rd Ferrying Group in Romulus (Wayne County), Michigan; and the 5th Ferrying Group at Love Field in Dallas, Texas. Five women were assigned to the 6th Ferrying Group in Long Beach, California.¹²⁰ In June, the second class graduated from Sweetwater, and in July, with a flurry of media attention, Cochran was officially named Director of Women Pilots. Nancy Love, who had directed the WAFS since the previous September, was relegated to the less influential position of Executive of Women Pilots in the ATC. The ambiguity underlying Cochran's appointment was evident in the title of a *Newsweek* article, "Coup for Cochran," in which the reporter revealed that "the ATC maintained that Miss Cochran's job was merely advisory and not superior to Mrs. Love's executive post." Officials at the AAF headquarters disagreed, insisting that Cochran had "highest authority" over the women pilots and that "if the Air Transport Command is not already aware of this, they will have to be made aware of it."¹²¹ Any controversy was ended when the WAFS and the WFTD were brought together as Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) on August 5th, with Cochran at its head.

Cochran's accession to head of all women pilots aggravated the negative feelings toward her by supporters of Love, including many in the Ferrying Division. Jacqueline Cochran and Nancy Love were two very different types of women. Although both were

¹¹⁹ "Women Learning to Be Army Pilots to Relieve Men in Ferry Command," *New York Times*, 28 April 1943, 16.

¹²⁰ Marx, *ATC History*, 119.

¹²¹ "Coup for Cochran," *Newsweek*, 19 July 1943, 40-42.

highly successful and experienced pilots, that is where the similarities end. The refined Love attended Vassar College and lived a privileged life. She was determined to lead a small group of elite women pilots in flying for the United States in its time of need. Love cooperated with the Air Transport Command and the Ferrying Division and flew a great deal during the war, using a solid flying record to expand the role the women played.¹²² Jacqueline Cochran grew up in poverty in Florida. She was on her own at the age of ten and fought her way to success, eventually creating a cosmetics business, marrying multi-millionaire Fred Odlum, and breaking air records across the nation. Cochran was determined to have women replace men in continental flying and she was equally determined to accomplish her goal her way.¹²³ Martha Wagenseil, a WASP from class 43-2, described the differences between Love and Cochran succinctly.

Everyone loved Nancy, I in particular. She was beautiful, she was sweet, she was skilled, she was accomplished, she was everything I would have liked to be. Jacqueline Cochran was everything Nancy was not. She was tough, she was hard, she was shrewd, and she was political. We needed Jackie to fight our battles and win for us. We needed them both.¹²⁴

Although many of the women who became WASPs declare loyalty to Cochran and firmly believe that they would have never been given the opportunity to fly if she had not been so determined to achieve her goals, her occasionally abrasive personality and unwillingness to compromise may have had a role in the disbandment of the WASPs, as will be discussed in chapter five. Regardless of their different personalities and goals, both Love and Cochran were vital to the success of the experiment of women military pilots.

¹²² Douglas, *United States Women*, 28.

¹²³ Jacqueline Cochran Odlum, *The Stars at Noon* (USA: Atlantic-Little, Brown, 1954).

¹²⁴ Martha Wagenseil, Oral History. Texas Woman's University's WASP Collection, Denton, Texas. Mss 265, Box 10, Byrd Granger Collection.

The duties of the WASPs within the FERD were slowly expanded as the demands of the war called for more planes to be delivered quickly and efficiently. The types of planes the WASPs flew became more advanced as the war progressed because fewer training and more operational aircraft, namely pursuit planes, were needed. All Army Air Force planes were divided into classes according to difficulty of flying. Every AAF pilot upgraded to more advanced planes progressively. Class I aircraft, the types the women were originally limited to, included single engine trainer, cargo, and utility types of aircraft. Class II included twin engine trainer and utility types; Class III included twin engine cargo and transport planes; Class IV included twin engine medium bomber, heavy transport, attack and pursuit planes; and Class V included four engine bomber and transport planes. In addition to being rated as qualified to fly by class, pilots were also determined to be Class P rated and Class "i" rated. Class P indicated the pilot was qualified to ferry single engine pursuit aircraft, such as the P-51 and the P-47. A Class "i" rating indicated the pilot was instrument certified, meaning she was qualified to fly using the plane's instruments only rather than visual references, such as when flying in clouds. The pilots were upgraded according to ability. By the end of November 1944, the WASPs in the FERD were distributed among the classes as follows: Class V, 4; Class IV, 29; Class III, 102; Class II, 4; Class I, 1; Pursuit, 113.¹²⁵

The high number of women qualified to fly pursuit aircraft developed from the increased need for pursuit ferry pilots. Before they were qualified to fly the pursuit planes, all ferry pilots attended pursuit school. They did not have the opportunity to fly each type of pursuit while in school, but they were familiarized with some of the more advanced aircraft. Violet Cowden (43-4) described the flight training the women received at pursuit school.

¹²⁵ Marx, *ATC History*, 44, 148.

We had ten hours in the back of an AT-6, and then the first pursuit that we flew was the P-47, and then the P-40 and the P-51. Those were the only ones on the field. And then we went to fly the P-39s and the P-63 - we would just go up to the factories and they would give us the manual and we would look at the manual [and jump in].¹²⁶

It was common practice for a WASP to go to a factory and be assigned to ferry an aircraft she had never flown before. Margaret Ray Ringenberg (43-5) supported Cowden's story as she explained, "you see we were sent to pick up an airplane, we went over the checklist, we familiarized ourselves with the airplane, we got in, and we went."¹²⁷ As the women began progressing into more advanced aircraft, the AAF began to see their potential in yet another role.

The women pilots were, on occasion, used to convince the men pilots that a particular aircraft was safe. The idea was that if a woman could fly a type of plane safely, then the men should be able to as well; it was a play to the male-ego. In mid-1943, the male ferry pilots at Romulus were having difficulties flying the new P-39 Airacobra, a sensitive pursuit airplane. A number of the men had not followed the manufacturer's technical orders closely enough on take off and landing, and several of them had been killed in crashes. The other male pilots began calling the P-39 a "flying coffin" and refused to fly them. Then a WAF convinced her commanding officer to give her a chance to fly the P-39. After carefully following the technical orders she safely checked out in the plane, with two more WAFS following shortly thereafter. Once the women began successfully delivering the planes, the men learned what they had been doing wrong, and began to fly the planes safely.¹²⁸ The reasons for their initial utilization in aircraft with less than

¹²⁶ Cowden, interview with author, 4 August 1996.

¹²⁷ Margaret Ray Ringenberg, WASP Class 43-5, interview with author, 20 July 1996, Dayton, Ohio, tape recording.

¹²⁸ Keil, *Wonderful Women*, 245-246.

favorable reputations, as well as the potential danger they faced, was not lost on the women who flew them. "The Pursuit Song" testifies to their awareness.

Oh, pursuit ships, they don't bother me
Pursuit ships, they don't bother me
Just push on the throttle and up with the gear
We are the buzz girls without any fear
So start saying goodbye to them all
As into our coffins we crawl
They'll be no promotions this side of the ocean
The Bell Booby Trap kills them all
Kills them all, kills them all
The long and the short and the tall
Damn these instructors who taught us to fly
Damn these old death traps in which we must die
So start saying goodbye to your life
Cause Waspie, you'll ne'er be a wife
I've got a notion you'll not cross the ocean
The Bell Booby Trap kills them all.¹²⁹

WASPs in other divisions of the AAF, namely the Training Command, were used as proof of aircraft safety and to shame the male pilots into flying them as well. Women were trained in the B-26 Marauder and the gigantic B-29 Superfortress, among others, for the Training Command. The FERD utilized women in this role when they were able.

In August 1943, the FERD was having problems with the vital B-17 Flying Fortress. The male ferry pilots were very nervous about flying the massive, four-engine bomber across the Atlantic Ocean, where it was desperately needed. Nancy Love and Betty Gillies were the answer to the head of the domestic wing of the FERD, Colonel William Tunner's, problem. The women trained and were checked out on the plane, which for tiny Gillies meant cushions behind and under her. On September 2nd, the women and a carefully selected flight crew headed for Prestwick, Scotland, via Goose Bay in Greenland. The trip to Goose Bay took three days due to bad weather, but on

¹²⁹ Kay Gott, *Women in Pursuit: Flying Fighters for the Air Transport Command Ferrying Division During World War II* (McKinleyville, CA: By the author, 1993), 67.

September 5th the women were ready to make the final jump of the flight to Scotland.¹³⁰ Unfortunately for the pilots, AAF Commanding General Henry Arnold, who was in London at the time, heard of the flight and cancelled it, issuing orders that "no women fly transoceanic planes until I have time to study and approve".¹³¹ Love, Gillies and much of the ATC and FERD staff believed that Cochran wanted to be the only woman to fly a military plane across the Atlantic and that she had the flight stopped. The official *History of the Air Transport Command* insisted that Cochran was wrongly accused and that the sequence of events proved that she had nothing to do with it.¹³² However, to this day Gillies believes that Cochran maliciously stopped the flight.¹³³ Colonel Tunner's and the FERD's belief that Cochran interfered with the flight furthered the animosity that existed between the FERD and Cochran.

As the WAFS and the WFTDs were being consolidated into the WASPs and Love and Gillies were attempting to fly across the Atlantic, the new WASPs were being kept busy. The war was intensifying and demand for aircraft was high. The new WASPs were welcomed into the FERD and put to work almost immediately. When Margaret Ray Ringenberg (43-5) arrived in Wilmington she was quickly sent out to ferry airplanes because there was a backlog of planes that needed to be ferried from one of the aircraft factories.¹³⁴ Tex Brown Meachem (43-7) was transferred to Wilmington, and declared that she was so busy she did not remember spending more than one overnight at the base at a time.

When we came back in, snafu, train, or however we came back, there would be orders on the bulletin board. And when you checked in they would find out what planes you

¹³⁰ Keil, *Wonderful Women*, 247.

¹³¹ Marx, *ATC History*, 158.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 159.

¹³³ Simbeck, telephone interview by author, 29 January 1997.

¹³⁴ Ringenberg, interview with author, 20 July 1996.

had been checked out in and they would pull it off the bulletin board and put your name on it, and the next day you were out.¹³⁵

Violet Cowden (43-4), based at Love Field in Dallas, maintained that the duties of the WASPs with the FERD were not strictly limited to ferrying. "So my job was to pick up the planes from the factory and take them to their point of debarkation," she explained. "Sometimes when I picked up the plane, they were supposed to have been tested for an hour, and ... I'd go out there and they hadn't been tested. The mechanic would come in and write an hour [in the plane's log book]." In other words, the WASPs were frequently test pilots for airplanes fresh from the factory. "I wondered if they had put everything together all right, the engine and stuff," Cowden continued. "But then when it really flew, to think that you were the first person to fly that airplane - it was like when you walk in snow and you are the first person to step on that snow. You ... feel really wonderful."¹³⁶

Cornelia Fort described the experience of the typical ferry pilot for an article in the July 1943 *Woman's Home Companion* magazine. She expressed dismay at the misguided attitude many non-fliers held toward the pilots.

They chatter about the glamor of flying. Well, any pilot can tell you how glamorous it is. We get up in the cold dark in order to get to the airport by daylight. We wear heavy, cumbersome flying clothes and a 30-pound parachute. We are either cold or hot. Lipstick wears off, and hair gets straighter and straighter. We look forward all afternoon to a bath and steak; we get the bath, but seldom the steak. Sometimes we are too tired to eat and fall wearily into bed.¹³⁷

Fort went on to explain why she flew, despite the obvious hardships. The experiences she described of discomfort and a very unglamorous lifestyle were familiar to every WASP who flew for the ferry command. The duties and experiences of the WASPs in the FERD are clear, but how they were evaluated by others, namely the Ferrying Division and the

¹³⁵ Meachem, interview with author, 3 October 1996.

¹³⁶ Cowden, interview with author, 4 August 1996.

¹³⁷ Fort, "Twilight", 13.

Army Air Force, is important in determining the degree to which the women were effective pilots.

The first indication of concern about the women pilots came with the utilization of the first class of WFTD graduates in April 1943. By mid-May the various ferrying groups reported to the FERD Command that the new women pilots were highly qualified and doing a good job. While they praised the early class, officers from at least one base voiced concern about the possible quality of future graduates, citing their lack of flight experience.¹³⁸ The dilemma for the FERD, and a key source of Colonel Tunner's arguments with Cochran, was that they believed the women should be required to have 300 flight hours upon joining the FERD, the same as the male civilian pilots hired by the division. Cochran and the AAF disagreed, citing the fact that the women went through the same military flight training as the male AAF cadets, with the exception of aerial combat and formation training, and were well qualified to ferry aircraft across the United States. This primary conflict of opinion about minimum qualifications for ferry pilots would continue throughout the life of the WASP experiment.

By the fall of 1943, tangible concerns about the WASPs emerged from FERD headquarters. In August, Colonel William Tunner reported that there were "an excessive number of accidents and mishaps among women pilots, all of which since April involved graduates of the Women's Flying Training Detachment."¹³⁹ Tunner and the FERD became increasingly concerned over whether these women could safely upgrade to pursuit aircraft. In September 1943, the FERD Headquarters sent a letter to ATC Headquarters which included the following observations: "It is felt that many recent graduates are so-called 'airport pilots' and have neither the training nor the qualifications to assume the responsibility of completing a ferrying flight distant from the home base without close

¹³⁸ Marx, *ATC History*, 120.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

personal supervision." The letter continued to recommend changes be made in the women's training to make them more suitable for ferrying duties. The official history of the Air Transport Command contends that for ten months, "the two most important themes were that graduates of WFTD were less capable than those first received, and that it was difficult to fit them into the pursuit program." But the report continued that, "as to the first complaint, it appears to have been levelled against a minority of new WASPs rather than against them as a whole."¹⁴⁰

These allegations against the WASPs deserve analysis. The decrease in required minimum flight time was a sore spot with Colonel Tunner from the beginning of the women's training program, but Tunner was not unreasonable in his requests for experienced pilots. He was responsible for making certain the planes were ferried quickly and safely to their destinations. He could not, in war time, be concerned with unqualified pilots. It is possible that his bias against the lower time pilots may have prevented him from recognizing that the training the women received was directly relevant to the type of flying and the types of planes they would be ferrying with the FERD, making them more qualified than the average civilian pilot. However, Tunner's concern over the lower flight time is valid in that less experience could logically lead to a drop in learned abilities. With the grave importance of his responsibilities and the increase in the number of accidents, it is understandable why Tunner and the FERD were concerned.

The WASP accident rate did increase as the program progressed. In the first six months of 1943 the WASP accident rate per thousand aircraft hours flown was a low .38. The male pilot accident rate for the same period was 1.27 per thousand hours flown. The second half of 1943 saw the WASP rate nearly double to .87, while the male rate dropped to .78. The rise in the WASP rate can be attributed to the increase in the number of

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 128-129.

women pilots, namely those with less flight experience that Tunner expressed concern about. For all of 1944 the WASP rate was again higher at 1.38 accidents per thousand hours flown. The male rate for the same period was only .58 accidents.¹⁴¹ The increase in the women's accident rate for 1944 can be directly tied to the increased number of pursuit aircraft flown. Of the 6,922 deliveries made by WASPs in 1944, 3,677 were pursuit aircraft. That equals over fifty-three percent of the planes.¹⁴² The significance of the high percentage of pursuit aircraft is the fact that more pursuit planes were involved in accidents in the FERD, for all pilots, than other types of aircraft. While only 20% of the FERD ferrying movements involved pursuit aircraft, 37% of all accidents involved pursuits. The *History of the Air Transport Command* stated that, "for the continental Air Forces in 1944, the accident rate for heavy bombers was 0.29, for single engine pursuits it was 1.34, and for a single notorious type, the P-39, it was 2.88." The report continued,

the most interesting conclusion to which these considerations lead is that throughout their career the women ferry pilots, for a variety of reasons, concentrated on types of ferrying essentially more hazardous than done by their male colleagues. So far as is known, there was no tendency among them to complain about this; if anything, at least in the pursuit period, it was a matter of pride.¹⁴³

Although the WASP's overall accident rate within the FERD equaled 1.11 per thousand flight hours while the men's overall rate equaled only .78 per thousand hours, the numbers are not directly comparable.¹⁴⁴ The official history of the ATC revealed that during the same period the women were flying increasing numbers of pursuit aircraft, while the men were flying heavier aircraft, particularly bombers which had sophisticated instruments and navigators aboard. The women always flew solo, often without working instruments, and

¹⁴¹ Ibid., appendix 1, 13.

¹⁴² Ibid., appendix 1, 17-18.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 157.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., appendix 1, 13.

due to the lighter aircraft, were required to make more take-offs and landings, the most dangerous part of flying.¹⁴⁵ So although the overall accident rate of the women is somewhat higher than the men's rate, the types of planes the women flew as compared to the men, while not eradicating the difference, drastically reduces its significance.

Perhaps partially in response to Colonel Tunner's and the FERD's concerns about the less experienced pilots, the WASP training program did become longer and more complex as it went on. The later graduates were required to receive 560 hours of ground school and 210 of flight training, in contrast to the substantially lower requirements of the first class, 180 hours of ground school and only 115 hours of flight training. The later classes spent more time training for cross-country flying and trained in more advanced planes, including the AT-6.¹⁴⁶ These changes in training may have helped eliminate some of Tunner's concerns.

The transfer, in July 1944, of 123 women out of the FERD and into the AAF Training Command apparently eased tensions as well. The women transferred out of the FERD "consisted of the least experienced, plus some whose ability was doubted, and others who signified that they did not wish to fly fighters."¹⁴⁷ The last group included three of the original WAFS. Other reasons given by the ATC for transferring some of the women out of the FERD included being eliminated from pursuit school, failing to progress to more advanced classes, not being considered pursuit material, and "insufficient experience".¹⁴⁸ As is evident from the high percentage of pursuit aircraft the women flew, being able to qualify to fly pursuit aircraft was essential to the needs of the FERD.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 155.

¹⁴⁶ Gabrielle Marie Everett, *The Women Airforce Service Pilots: A Comparative Analysis of Class 43-W-1 and 44-W-10* (Thesis, Arkansas State University, 1995) 43, 45, 69, 71.

¹⁴⁷ Marx, *ATC History*, 147.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 147.

According to Cochran, "considerable criticism and resentment have been directed at WASP personnel who ferry the higher class aircraft." The criticism was apparently from male pilots who saw the WASPs flying aircraft they were not yet qualified to fly.¹⁴⁹ Marion Hodgson (43-5) supported Cochran's comment as she explained "some men resented us. They were the insecure types who thought we were taking something away from them. So we knew we had to fly better and gripe less than the men."¹⁵⁰ The Air Transport Command admitted that some resentment against the women existed among some of the male pilots. "Allegations that women were favored in transition training and in desirable assignments were made," the official history noted, "but seem to have been entirely unfounded. Undoubtedly it was galling to some young men to see a woman fly a plane which they were not yet qualified to handle." According to the history, the resentment "was always confined to a minority."¹⁵¹

Several of the WASPs corroborate the ATC contention that it was the minority of men who showed resentment toward the women. While Marion Hodgson supported Cochran above, she also explained that "male pilots were mostly friendly and admiring."¹⁵² Margaret Chamberlain Tamplin (44-3) believes she was fortunate because she "never felt discriminated against by the male pilots." Tamplin maintained, "they treated me with respect and as an equal in so far as flying."¹⁵³ Mary Edith Engle (43-4) described the mixed response the women received. "Many [of the men] would just walk by and ignore us while others were friendly and accepted us as one of them." Engle declared "their reactions didn't bother me as I was happy doing what I loved to do -

¹⁴⁹ Jacqueline Cochran, Report on Women Airforce Service Pilots, 1 August 1944. Texas Woman's University WASP Collection, Mss 265, Byrd Granger, Box 4.

¹⁵⁰ "Typist Flew to Our Defense," *Ft. Worth Star Telegram*, 9 August 1988, part 2, section 1.

¹⁵¹ Marx, *ATC History*, 125.

¹⁵² Hodgson, questionnaire, 6 November 1996, in author's possession.

¹⁵³ Tamplin, questionnaire, 10 October 1996, in author's possession.

FLY."¹⁵⁴ Lillian Epsberg Goodman (43-5) supported Engle's attitude toward any resentment, saying that "I was so young and happy to be flying that if there was any animosity toward us, I never noticed."¹⁵⁵ There is no evidence that male resentment could have been a motivation for the transfer of some of the women. On the contrary, there is evidence that the FERD highly valued the women they kept, as will be shown during discussion of the WASP disbandment. Once the women the FERD did not deem qualified to fly pursuits were transferred out of the division, "it had a fairly stable women's auxiliary which concentrated largely on ferrying fighters, thereby rendering a very valuable service," and "it was well satisfied with the group which remained."¹⁵⁶ A lack of further complaint about the women, as well as the FERD struggle to retain its women pilots upon WASP disbandment, supports the official history's conclusion.

Upon the WASP disbandment in December 1944, the Air Transport Command called for evaluation reports from each of the bases that had utilized the WASPs. This information was used in part to create the official ATC history that has been referred to throughout this study. Fortunately, the appendix of the history included the reports as they were submitted to the ATC. As a result, a direct analysis of the WASP evaluations is possible. The bases sent ATC Historical Officer Captain Walter Marx letters answering specific questions about the utilization of WASPs on their bases. The women participated in pursuit school at a variety of bases and the overall evaluation is below.

The WASPs performance in pursuit school was, overall, quite good. Of the first fifteen WASPs to attend pursuit school in late 1943, fourteen graduated. The fifteenth woman, Dorothy Scott, was killed while on final approach by a male piloting a P-39. The P-39 collided with Scott's BC-1 from above and behind. The accident was deemed to

¹⁵⁴ Engle, questionnaire, 25 August 1996, in author's possession.

¹⁵⁵ Lillian Epsberg Goodman, questionnaire, June 1996, in author's possession.

¹⁵⁶ Marx, *ATC History*, 143-144.

have been entirely the fault of the male pilot and the tower. Of the fourteen women who graduated, five were from the original WAFS and the remaining nine were WFTD graduates.¹⁵⁷ Although exact figures are unavailable, as noted above at least 113 women became pursuit qualified.

The evaluations of the WASPs did reveal some problems, as well. One problem reported concerning women pilots from the pursuit schools came from the 1st Operational Training Unit (OTU) at St. Joseph, Missouri. The Unit reported that "women pilots were lacking in mechanical aptitude, so that it was necessary to give them additional time in order to convey a thorough understanding of such matters as hydraulic and electric systems."¹⁵⁸ The 4th Operational Training Unit out of Brownsville, Texas also reported that women tended to have a general mechanical aptitude lower than men. Thirty-seven percent of the women were eliminated from pursuit training at Brownsville as opposed to a twelve percent elimination rate for the men. All but two of the women were eliminated for flying deficiencies or inaptitude for fighter type planes.¹⁵⁹ The official ATC history concurred with the Operational Training Unit findings, concluding that "in general, the women seem to have lacked the level of mechanical background to be found among male pilots."¹⁶⁰ This lack of "aptitude" is understood to indicate a lack of experience and/or education working with mechanical equipment. Part of the WASP ground school curriculum included mechanical courses such as on engines, and the time required in the courses was increased as the training program developed. Many of the women did not own cars or their own planes, and so had not had previous opportunities to work with them. To compensate for their lack of knowledge and experience with hydraulic and

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 146.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 147.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., Appendix 2, 174.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 147.

electrical systems, the women simply reported to pursuit school classes at the Operational Training Units five days earlier than the men. This extra time appears to have been enough for the women to complete successfully that part of the program.

The final evaluations of other FERD bases concurred with the pursuit schools' findings about the lack of mechanical experience. Comments that appeared fairly consistently in the reports was that the women had a mechanical background and knowledge consistently lower than male pilots.¹⁶¹ The evaluations revealed other problems or deficiencies the bases found in the WASPs as well. Half of the FERD bases returning reports on the WASPs mentioned a lack of physical strength in the women as compared to men. Most of the concern surrounding this comment had to do with whether the women would be strong enough to handle specific aircraft, particularly four engine planes, in times of emergency.¹⁶² Considering the massiveness of the four engine bombers, it is not difficult to understand the hesitation, but the women themselves proved these concerns to be unnecessary. In reference to the training of Love and Gillies in the B-17, Sally Van Wagenen Keil reported that "the men in the ferrying division transition crew marveled at the skill and stamina of the two women pilots, especially ... Gillies who, with cushions behind and under her, could hold the bomber level on a three-engine procedure like any AAF officer twice her size."¹⁶³ Other WASPs, not in the FERD, flew four-engine bombers within the U.S. with great success, proving that the worries of the FERD commanders were unfounded. No other complaints concerning the WASPs arose from the evaluations, with the exception of the report from the 3rd Ferrying Group in Romulus, Michigan.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., Appendix 2, 170.

¹⁶² Ibid., Appendix 2, 170.

¹⁶³ Keil, *Wonderful Women*, 246.

While the evaluation reports from all other bases were two to three pages in length, the Romulus report was nineteen pages and filled with biased, negative comments. Although other bases noted a lack of mechanical aptitude in many of the women, the Romulus report (author unknown) argued that women were "essentially unmechanical" and had an "innate lack of mechanical aptitude" which made flying unsafe for women. The report continued to reveal that "in the opinion of one of the heads of Air Training at this station, only five percent of women flyers throughout the world are possessed of an inherent flying ability, present with few exceptions in male pilots."¹⁶⁴ These comments clearly reveal the strong bias of the Romulus command against women pilots in general. The report continued to use minor, unimportant events to attempt to prove its point that women should not fly. The Romulus report also claimed that the WASPs were often late for assignments and tried to avoid ground school courses which they often could not pass the first time. The report continued that the "girls are overly anxious for publicity and public acclaim....".¹⁶⁵ These last accusations were directly opposite of other bases' reports.

The Romulus report was not entirely negative, although its general tone is apparent. Other reports corroborated the Romulus admission that the WASPs were "both eager and anxious to complete an assigned task even under minimum weather conditions."¹⁶⁶ The 552nd AAF Base Unit (2nd Ferrying Group) at Republic Field in New York reported that

on several occasions, individual WASPs have been called upon to deliver as many as five aircraft to Newark in a single day, a performance which attests to their willingness to cooperate on a speeded-up schedule of operations as well as

¹⁶⁴ Marx, *ATC History*, appendix 2, 145.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., appendix 2, 148.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., appendix 2, 150.

to their stamina in meeting with the demands of increased activity.¹⁶⁷

Positive comments about the WASPs' excellent stamina, vital in a ferry pilot who is often required to fly long distances and always solo, were consistent throughout the base evaluations of the WASPs. All the bases who reported declared that the personal conduct of the WASPs was excellent. It should be remembered that, before the WASP experiment, the military was not certain if women were emotionally grounded enough to fly military planes, and the early restrictions of the women's movements were designed to limit their contact with male personnel. These evaluations about the women's conduct prove that the early concerns were unnecessary.

Although the WASP safety record has already been compared to the men's record, it is interesting to note that several of the bases reported that the women's record was comparable to men performing the same duties, indicating that the different types of planes the women were flying as compared to all men in the continental ATC probably affected the discrepancy in the accident rates. One of the final questions addressed by each of the bases dealt with whether the WASPs could be effectively utilized as pilots in a time of national emergency. Only one base, the 5th Ferrying Group in Dallas, Texas, was not enthusiastic about the utilization of the women in time of emergency. As the base explained, the "average low level of flying experience makes it necessary for the average WASP pilot to remain on continuous duty status in order to retain flying proficiency."¹⁶⁸ This lack of proficiency would require additional training that in a time of emergency would not be practical. All other bases who reported were very positive about the utilization of WASPs in time of national emergency, including Romulus. The 552nd AAF Base Unit (2nd Ferrying Group) in Wilmington, Delaware, declared:

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., appendix 2, 127.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., appendix 2, 177.

It is the considered opinion of this Headquarters that the WASPs have demonstrated, beyond question, the fact that they can be counted upon to successfully complete domestic flying missions during national emergency. Their splendid record and untiring efforts have made them invaluable to this Command.¹⁶⁹

A consistent theme that ran through all of the base evaluations was that the WASPs should have been militarized, and if utilized again they should be immediately be brought into the military. The reasons listed for militarization included everything from elimination of duplication of authority to increased discipline, improved morale, and government insurance. It is apparent that the bases where they were stationed believed that the WASPs safely and efficiently fulfilled their duties as ferry pilots.

In January 1944, the public began to learn of the WASPs efficiency when several articles came out discussing the WASPs in a positive manner. One *New York Times* article described General Arnold, commanding general of the AAF, commending the WASPs as doing an "effective job of delivering aircraft in the United States...."¹⁷⁰ On the same page a different article titled, "Wasps, to Be 600 Strong This Month, Hope Soon to Be Members of the Army Air Forces," brought to light the active desire of the WASP organization to officially become a part of the military.¹⁷¹ Congressional action toward that goal got under way on February 17, 1944, when Representative John Costello of California proposed H.R. 4219 calling for the militarization of the WASPs. But controversy surrounded the bill because of two announcements that had been made the previous month.

On January 15th, the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) announced that its War Training Service (WTS) program was eliminated and the AAF announced that the

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., appendix 2, 170.

¹⁷⁰ "Arnold Hails WAC on Air Force Duty," *New York Times*, 4 January 1944, 14.

¹⁷¹ "WASPs to Be 600 Strong This Month, Hope Soon to Be Members of the Army Air Forces," *New York Times*, 4 January 1944, 14.

Civilian Pilot Training programs would be ended June 30th. Apparently losses of airmen in the European theatre had been lower than were expected, and thus new pilots were no longer in high demand. The announcements put thousands of male civilian pilots who had been serving as flight instructors for the CAA and AAF out of work, and ended their deferment out of the Army's ground forces. On February 24th, just one week after Costello proposed the WASP bill, another bill was submitted to the House that proposed to commission the out-of-work Civil Aeronautics Administration-War Training Service pilots. That same day Representative Robert Ramspeck (Georgia), head of the Civil Service Investigating Committee, began his investigation of the WASP, prompted by members of the House and Senate as well as supporters of the male pilots. The issues of the unemployed male pilots and the fate of the WASPs became hopelessly intertwined, and the issues surrounding both became clouded by politics. Their losing battle for militarization and their eventual disbandment in December 1944, despite a successful record, place the WASPs among thousands of American women who were removed from their jobs in favor of men.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EXPERIMENT ENDS: DISBANDMENT

The spring of 1944 was a busy one for the WASPs in the FERD. The Allies were preparing for their invasion of Europe and demand for aircraft was at an all time high. While the WASPs were ferrying aircraft to debarkation points in preparation for the Battle of Normandy, a different kind of battle was brewing in Congress that would determine the fate of the women pilots. From the initiation of the experiment, the primary advocates of the program, namely Colonel William Tunner, Nancy Love, Jacqueline Cochran, and General Henry "Hap" Arnold, intended for the women pilots to be made a part of the military. Problems to be discussed below prevented the immediate militarization of the women and they were established as a civilian organization working for the Army Air Force. This chapter investigates why the women were never made an official part of the military and analyzes who supported and opposed the militarization of the women. It also explains why the WASPs were disbanded in December 1944, long before the war was finished.

In order to understand the battle over WASP militarization, and why it ultimately failed, it is important to first understand who made up the opposing sides of the militarization bill and their reasons for supporting or opposing the WASPs. Representative John Costello of California proposed the WASP militarization bill, H.R. 4219. At least one hundred sixty-nine Congressmen supported militarization, as evidenced by their vote in favor of the bill's passage. Many undoubtedly supported the bill because the Army Air Force, including Commanding General Henry Arnold and FERD commander Colonel William Tunner, strongly supported the WASP being brought into the AAF. Originally Colonel Tunner envisioned the women working as civilians for a ninety day trial, and then being commissioned into the Women's Army Corps (WAC). Problems

concerning the women pilots joining the Women's Army Corps arose with the legislation creating the WAC, namely the lack of provisions for flight pay and some discrepancies in admission requirements. The problems prompted Nancy Love to push for acceptance of the women as civilians until something could be worked out at a later date. Love recognized the need for pilots, and wanted the women to have a chance to prove themselves.¹⁷² Jacqueline Cochran agreed that the women should prove themselves as useful pilots to the AAF before militarization.¹⁷³ As a result of this decision, the militarization of the women was postponed until 1944. The AAF wanted the women to be militarized, as noted in chapter four, for reasons of discipline, morale, and so the women would receive government insurance and hospitalization.

Government insurance and hospitalization were among the reasons the WASPs themselves supported militarization, as well as the respect that came with being a member of the United States Army Air Force. Although some of the women preferred flying as civilians, according to a survey completed by Cochran in early 1944, 94.7% of the women wanted to be an official part of the military. Among those who opposed militarization were some women who had children and feared they would be forced to resign, and a few who simply preferred the flexibility of civilian status.¹⁷⁴ The WASPs wore uniforms, received demerits for poor behavior, and lived in barracks. Their lives were everything one envisions when imagining military life. And yet the women had no government insurance in case of injury or death. Of the thirty-eight WASPs who were killed flying for their nation, only Cornelia Fort's family received any benefits; she was the first woman to die and no policy concerning the women had yet been established. At some of the bases,

¹⁷² Deborah Douglas, "WASPs of War," Texas Woman's University's WASP Collection, Denton, Texas. WASP Bio-Files.

¹⁷³ Cochran, *Final Report*, 45.

¹⁷⁴ Keil, *Wonderful Women*, 300.

friends of the deceased WASPs donated money to ship the women's bodies home to their families. At other bases, the base commanders sent the women's bodies home and sent a fellow WASP to escort the bodies to their families. This reveals to what extent the women were at the mercy of the whims of the commanding officers of the bases where they were assigned, a situation that would have been somewhat relieved with their militarization. The women were civilians, and so they were not entitled to the benefits militarization would provide although they lived the lives and endured the risks of military pilots. Jacqueline Cochran pushed hard for WASP militarization for all of the above reasons and was accused by some opponents as also desperately wanting to be the highest ranking woman in the Army, particularly over Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby, head of the WAC.¹⁷⁵

The opponents of WASP militarization were many, including at least one hundred eighty-eight Congressmen who voted against the WASP bill. The Congressmen were pressured to vote against the bill by the unemployed Civil Aeronautics Administration - War Training Service (CAA-WTS) pilots. Upon losing their jobs, the male pilots lost their deferments out of the Army's ground forces. With the invasion of Europe and a planned later invasion of Japan, the likelihood of the healthy men of the group being drafted into the infantry was high. Their argument that they were skilled pilots and that it was a waste of taxpayer money to train more women as military pilots when they were available had some merit, although the total dissolution of the women's program wasted taxpayer money too. The CAA-WTS pilots recruited the American Legion to their cause, as well as much of the press. It is clear that the male pilots opposed the WASPs because of their own unemployment and possible induction into the infantry, and the Congressmen were likely

¹⁷⁵ U.S. Congress. House. *Appendix to the Congressional Record*, 78th Congress, 2nd Session, 1944. (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1944), 3561.

influenced by the intense lobbying of the men and their supporters. The shift of the press from lauding the role of the WASPs in the war effort to accusing them of stealing men's jobs can be tied to both the exaggerated claims made in the House against the WASPs, as well as the general trend that was beginning in the nation to push American women out of non-traditional jobs and back into the home. The battle for the passage of the Costello Bill to militarize the WASP may have been one of the first signs of the struggle American women would face to retain the progress they had made during the war.

The battle for militarization of the WASP began on March 22, 1944. General Henry H. Arnold, advocate of bringing the WASP into the AAF, was the only witness for the House Committee on Military Affairs hearing concerning the WASP bill. Arnold began his statement to the Committee with the observation that "right at this moment the Army is short over 200,000 men...."¹⁷⁶ He continued to discuss the manpower shortage and how utilizing women was the best way to relieve the problem. Arnold explained what duties the WASPs were carrying out and boasted about their abilities as pilots.¹⁷⁷ The General went on to describe why the WASPs could not be a part of the already established Women's Army Corps (WAC). Many of the WASPs were younger than the WAC age requirement of twenty years old, and several of the pilots violated the WAC regulation against having children under the age of fourteen. Arnold declared the women needed to be admitted into the AAF because as civilians the women did not have the benefits, such as insurance and death benefits, that were their due.¹⁷⁸

The remainder of the hearing was dedicated to Arnold's explanation of why the male former Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) instructors were not being

¹⁷⁶ U.S. Congress. House. *Hearings Before the Committee On Military Affairs; On H.R. 4219*, 78th Congress, 2nd Session, 22 March 1944. (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1944), 2.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

automatically admitted into the AAF. Arnold described how the men who were qualified were being accepted as pilots or bombardiers, navigators, or other important jobs, including as ferry pilots in the Air Transport Command.

If they cannot qualify according to our standards in one of these capacities then we offer them other training in the Army Air Forces. We cannot lower our standards because a man has had a few hours in the air. They must meet our standards."¹⁷⁹

The majority of men Arnold said the AAF was trying to find jobs for were a part of the AAF Reserve. As for the other men, Arnold bluntly stated "we don't consider we owe them anything because they were offered a chance to join the Reserve and did not take advantage of it. And now when they see they are likely to be drafted they want to come in and it is too late."¹⁸⁰ General Arnold's obvious disgust for their efforts reveals the AAF's attitude toward the former instructors who were not willing to make any commitment to the AAF when they had nothing to gain for it and then, in order to avoid being drafted into the infantry, were screaming that they wanted to be a part of the AAF. In response to the male CAA pilots' accusations that the women's qualifications were lower than the men's qualifications, the Military Affairs Committee asked Arnold questions concerning WASP standards and training as compared to that of male pilots. Satisfied with Arnold's explanation of the equality of the requirements, the Committee voted to recommend the passage of the WASP Bill, H.R. 4219.

Jacqueline Cochran silently sat next to General Arnold during his testimony to the Military Affairs Committee. She did not speak out in support of the WASPs and ordered the women to refrain from writing to their Congressmen and from landing their planes in Washington to avoid publicity. Cochran believed that, with only the respected and

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 8.

admired Commanding General Arnold speaking out in favor of WASP militarization, the women would not appear "pushy".¹⁸¹ The WASPs themselves did not write, but some had their families write to their Congressmen on their behalf. The FERD was not vocal in its need for the women pilots either, based on a War Department decision to halt all publicity on the WASP due to the misrepresentation of the women's actions by the out-of-work male pilots and their supporters. Also, WASP advocate Colonel William Tunner of the FERD had been promoted and was commanding the airlift over the Himalayas when the WASP disbandment was announced, and thus he was unaware of or unable to defend the women pilots.¹⁸² The decision to place WASP militarization entirely on the prestige of General Arnold, who up to this point had not been refused any requests from Congress, was a fatal one for the WASP bill.

On March 25th the *New York Times* reported that Representative Charles Halleck (Indiana) had raised the question of whether the women even wanted to join the AAF. He pointed out that none of the women themselves had come before the House declaring their desire to do so.¹⁸³ This question was undoubtedly on the minds of other Congressmen as well, and the WASP silence did not ease their doubts. The congressional proponents of the bill did not organize as they could have and undoubtedly would have if support for the bill had been louder and more demanding. The cautious approach was a sign of the times concerning women in a traditionally male role; it was a continuous thread throughout the experiment of women pilots. In early May, Secretary of War Stimson came out in favor of the WASPs and defended their work by declaring that "neither the existence nor the militarization of the Wasp will keep out of the Army Air Forces a single instructor or partially trained civilian pilot who desires to become a service pilot or cadet and can meet

¹⁸¹ Keil, *Wonderful Women*, 300.

¹⁸² "WASP Special to Couple," *Panorama*, 9 July 1978, 15.

¹⁸³ "WASP Bill Strikes a Committee Snag," *New York Times*, 25 March 1944, 19.

the applicable standards of the Army Air Forces."¹⁸⁴ Despite Stimson's assurances, WASP opponents seized upon the bill and utilized the sympathies of the press and the traditional bias against women in non-traditional roles and squashed the AAF plans for WASP militarization.

The male CAA pilots intensified their fight for their own utilization as pilots and against the WASPs in April 1944. The disgruntled pilots inundated their congressmen with letters and visits protesting their loss of deferment status and especially objecting to the use of women pilots when the men were available. The congressmen responded to the male pilots pleas, many fervently supporting the men at the expense of the WASPs. Throughout the months of April, May and June 1944, several members of Congress publicly questioned the necessity and quality of the women pilots. The question of the authorization for the money spent on the WASP program was also a sore point for a Congress whose authority had been weakened by strong presidential leadership during a depression and a world war. Several congressmen extended their comments against the WASP in the appendices to the *Congressional Record*, with some even including negative comments from the press. Some of the comments put forth were legitimate concerns, while others were thinly veiled or openly biased attacks.

There were numerous congressional attacks against the women. On April 25th Representative James Morrison (Louisiana) showed concern for the unemployed male pilots as well as for the potential cost of training more women. "Why release male pilots who have been trained at great cost and with great expenditure in time and effort from pilot duties," he asked, "just so women can be trained, while receiving salaries of \$150 per month, to replace them?"¹⁸⁵ Morrison continued by quoting an article in the February 1944 issue of *American Aviation*, stating that although it was understandable that the

¹⁸⁴ "Wasp Militarization Favored By Stimson," *New York Times*, 5 May 1944, 2.

¹⁸⁵ House, *Appendix*, 1970.

women wanted to fly, they simply were not as "suitable" for the job as men and that everyone, including the AAF, knew it.¹⁸⁶ As has been shown in chapter four, these accusations against the women's abilities as compared to men's were unfounded and untrue. The attitude that the women could not possibly be as capable in the cockpit of military aircraft as men was consistent in many of the WASP opponents' comments.

Some of the articles submitted to the appendices of the *Congressional Record* were vicious in their degradation of the WASPs. A May 1944 article in the *Idaho Statesman* speculated that the women were allowed to fly due to the "sentimental softness of American men in regard to their women." The article crassly continued, "in colleges the smooth, good-looking gals can get A's without a lick of work; and in the armed services it may be that dimples have a devastating effect even on the generals."¹⁸⁷ Insults of this type continued in Congress and the media throughout the battle for militarization. In early June, Austine Cassini wrote an article in the *Washington Times-Herald* entitled "These Charming People". Describing Cochran as a "shapely pilot" and "an attractive composition of wind-blown bob, smiling eyes and outdoor skin," Cassini accused General Arnold of gazing into Cochran's eyes and taking "her cause celebre very much 'to heart'". Cassini snidely concluded,

It's whispered he's battling like a knight of olde, or olde knight, for "the faire Cochran." So the announcement can be expected any day that Jackie's commission has been approved, if the captivated general is victorious in his tournaments.¹⁸⁸

These articles are only a few examples of the biased and often vicious attacks the WASPs faced in their struggle to be recognized by Congress as part of the AAF.

¹⁸⁶ House, *Appendix*, 1970-1971.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 2879.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3093.

The negative image the WASP opponents were using to portray the women was consistent with the conflicting images for women of the period. "Rosie the Riveter" was hailed as a heroine early in the war, but the shift in advertisements and articles toward pushing the women back into the home and a return to femininity had already begun by the time of the WASP struggle. The WASPs themselves presented conflicting images. WASP Cornelia Fort has already been cited as having been frustrated by the false image that the women were performing a glamorous job, but the women were expected to keep their image non-threatening. Jacqueline Cochran, even when she was competing in air races, would always pause to fix her hair and re-apply her lipstick before climbing out of the cockpit to greet reporters. She expected her WASPs to be ladies at all times. The July 1943 issue of *Life* magazine had WASP Shirley Slade on its cover, braided pigtailed and all.¹⁸⁹ The image of these "girl" pilots was one of young adventurers, playing in a man's world, rather than as serious pilots doing a serious job. With attitudes such as these already prominent, it was easier for the uneducated or the blatantly biased to attack the women as unnecessary, wasteful and under-qualified for the "man's job" of ferry pilot.

Not only did the WASP face negative press, on June 5, 1944, the Ramspeck Committee released the report they had been working on since the previous February. The Ramspeck Committee, formally the House Committee on the Civil Service, was utilized to help Civil Service agencies make the most of their funding and to find any abuses within the agencies. The committee made clear early in the report that its investigation of the WASP was "not a question of the utilization of male or female personnel, but it is a question of the utilization of experience and capabilities before resorting to the use of inexperience and costly training."¹⁹⁰ In other words, the committee did not intend the report to be an attack against the women, but rather an

¹⁸⁹ "Girl Pilots," *Life*, 19 July 1943, 73-81.

¹⁹⁰ House, *Appendix*, 3059.

attack against wasteful spending and an argument for the most efficient utilization of personnel.

Despite the reassurance, the overall theme of the report was negative in nature.

Early on it declared:

The implication contained in the proposal [the WASP Bill], that it is now either necessary or desirable to recruit stenographers, clerks, school teachers, housewives, factory workers, and other inexperienced personnel for training at great outlay of public funds as pilots for the military planes of this Government, particularly when there already exists a surplus of personnel to perform these identical duties, is as startling as it is invalid. ¹⁹¹

The reference to the "surplus of personnel" is only one of many references to the unemployed male pilots who had been flooding Congress with letters describing their plight. The report speculated about the problems of the probable post-war surplus of pilots and noted that any additional training of pilots would only "add another surplus to this recognized post-war surplus." That the committee would even address such a concern is evidence that attitudes were shifting toward post-war worries as the Allies pushed toward Berlin.

The Ramspeck report addressed the high cost of training the women and pointed out what the committee saw as questionable authorization for the original training program, namely no specific authorization from Congress for the expense of the women's training program. The War Department justified its authority for the experiment of women pilots as part of a 1943 act allowing expenditures for the training of civilian employees.¹⁹² The complaints concerning proper authorization for money spent on the women's program may have added to the negative feelings already generated in Congress about the WASP. For most of the 1930s and early forties the Congress had allowed its

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 3058.

¹⁹² Ibid., 3059.

authority to be diminished by the President and the military as a result of the back-to-back emergencies of the Depression and the War. By mid-1944 Congress was beginning to reassert itself and its role in the government. The fact that the AAF had not specifically asked for funding for their experiment with the women placed additional doubt upon the legitimacy of their claim for military status.

The Ramspeck report briefly described the cost of training the women and compared the fatality and accident rate of male and female pilots. The remainder of the report was dedicated to the male civilian instructors and whether they were being treated unfairly and how they could be effectively utilized. The Committee completed the report with the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The proposal to expand the WASP has not been justified. Therefore, it is recommended that the recruiting of inexperienced personnel and their training for the WASPS be immediately terminated.
2. That the use of the WASPS already trained and in training be continued and provision be made for hospitalization and insurance.
3. There exist several surpluses of experienced pilot personnel available for utilization as service pilots.

Therefore, it is recommended that the service of these several groups of experienced air personnel be immediately utilized.¹⁹³

While the Ramspeck Report was embraced by the opponents of the WASP Bill, WASP supporters struggled to disprove it. Representative Costello, the author of the WASP Bill, tried to refute most of the report just days after its release in a speech to the House. "The most astounding part of this report," Costello responded, "is the assumption that there does exist a vast pool of well-trained pilots ready to serve the Army Air Forces at a moment's notice. This is an error which I would like to correct now."¹⁹⁴ Costello

¹⁹³ Ibid., 3061.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 2937.

addressed the Ramspeck report's concerns about the unemployed male pilots and revealed that many of the men were unable to pass the AAF class 2 physical examination, as required of male ferry pilots. He then disproved the WASP's opponent's contentions that the women were not physically qualified to fly military aircraft and that the male pilots were being discriminated against in favor of the women. "If there has been any discrimination indicated at all it, in my opinion, has certainly been discrimination in favor of these pilot instructors," Costello insisted. "It is apparently not understood that every girl trainee must pass a physical examination in every way equal to that of a combat pilot."¹⁹⁵

Finally, Costello cited the 11,000 airplanes that had been used in the invasion in Europe on D-Day less than a week earlier. He admitted that he did not know how many replacements would be needed as a result of the air war over Europe, but asserted his certainty that the men in charge of the air war were more qualified in determining the need for pilots than were members of Congress. He then concluded his arguments with a reminder that the head of the AAF, General Arnold himself, had requested the passage of the WASP bill.¹⁹⁶ Despite Costello's and a few other's efforts, the WASPs inclusion as an official part of the AAF was not to be. On June 21, 1944, after extensive debate on the House floor, the enacting clause of the WASP Bill was stricken by a roll call vote of 188 to 169, with 73 members not voting. The failure of H.R. 4219 meant that the training program would be ended, although those already in training would graduate, and the women already on active duty would remain so. The total disbandment of the WASPs six months later occurred because of additional factors.

To a limited extent Jacqueline Cochran, Director of the WASP, can be held responsible for the dissolution of the women's program. Cochran's determination to have

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 2938.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 2938.

events go her way or not at all had already gained her some enemies. Cochran knew what she did and did not want for her women pilots. Her thoughts on the WASP being made a part of the WAC, an idea considered by the FERD and AAF both before and after the failure of the WASP Bill, were very clear. Jacqueline Cochran hated Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby, the head of the WACS, and refused to even consider the WASPs becoming a part of that organization. Some have accused Cochran of being jealous of Hobby's position and of not being willing to be subordinate to another woman, and they may not be completely mistaken.¹⁹⁷ In an autobiography, Cochran described her confrontation with Hobby when General Arnold first suggested that the WASPs become part of the WAC, writing that "if she [Hobby] didn't understand airplanes or the kind of women who flew them, then she had no business being their commanding officer. It was my job and I wanted to keep it. I just couldn't see throwing my girls in with that bunch."¹⁹⁸ Cochran explained the failure of the WASP bill as follows:

I lost the battle for militarization of the WASPs in Congress in the summer of 1944 and I believe I lost because of *Mrs. Hobby* [Cochran's italics] and her powers. But, looking back at the outcry of telegrams from congressmen who voted against us, I don't think they all knew what they were voting away.¹⁹⁹

Cochran's unwillingness to allow "her girls" to become part of the WAC, if that was really a feasible option, was only a minor part in the WASP disbandment. The WASP disbandment in December 1944 appears to be a total reversal of the AAF position earlier in the year. While advocating WASP militarization, General Arnold contended that he desperately needed more women pilots and yet, by October 3, 1944, he announced that

¹⁹⁷ Jaros, *Heroes*, 208.

¹⁹⁸ Jacqueline Cochran and Maryann Buchnum Brinley. *Jackie Cochran: The Autobiography of the Greatest Woman Pilot in Aviation History* (US: Bantam Books, 1987) 207.

¹⁹⁹ Cochran, *Jackie Cochran*, 214.

they would disband in December. One major factor that influenced the decision to end the WASP experiment was the apparent shift in the tide of the war. In August 1944, Paris was liberated, and by October American B-29s were bombing Japan. The Battle of the Bulge had not started yet and the level of emergency that had existed when General Arnold went before the House Committee on Military Affairs the previous March no longer seemed as intense. The projected losses of men in Europe had not occurred and so the need for women to replace male pilots to release them for other duties no longer made sense.

In his book *Global Mission*, written shortly after the war, Arnold said "the WASPS did a magnificent job for the Army Air Forces in every way."²⁰⁰ He explained their disbandment as a result of a movement in Congress "obviously backed by male pilot organizations." He claimed the push began when he asked for appropriations for the WASPs for 1945. Arnold marveled that "everyone admitted they had done a wonderful job. Yet when the matter was taken up with Congress the answer was, 'Thumbs down! No more money for WASPS! Discharge your women and send them home.'"²⁰¹ His comments indicate that when the prospect of a second battle for the WASPs arose in the Senate in the fall of 1944, Arnold was not willing to stand up and fight for the WASPs again due to the shift in the tide of the war as well as the shift in public opinion against American women in general. In August 1944, Jacqueline Cochran submitted a report to General Arnold as the WASPs neared their second anniversary. She reviewed the purposes of the WASPs, explained the training program, and described the duties the WASPs were carrying out and their effectiveness at those duties. Cochran also revealed her surprising viewpoint on the permanence of women in the AAF, writing "certain it is that the WASPs will have no useful place with the AAF when the male pilots who wish to

²⁰⁰ Henry "Hap" Arnold. *Global Mission* (NY: Harper Bros., 1946), 358.

²⁰¹ Arnold, *Global Mission*, 359.

remain in service are sufficient in number to perform all the duties."²⁰² In addition to this revelation that she did not believe women should retain a permanent role as pilots in the AAF, the final conclusion in Cochran's report was an ultimatum on militarization.

Cochran declared that "serious consideration should be given to inactivation if militarization is not soon authorized. If such action should be taken, an effort should be made to obtain military status, if only for one day, and resulting veterans' recognition for all who have served commendably."²⁰³

There is no evidence to suggest that Jacqueline Cochran was insincere in her efforts to gain military status for the WASPs. Her apparently conflicting positions concerning women replacing men were consistent with the times and the propaganda of the period to encourage women back into the home once the emergency of the war had ended. As noted in chapter one, historians have taken great interest in the effort to return women to their traditional roles of wife and mother. Fears of a postwar depression gnawed on the minds of the American public, and the government and businesses responded with propaganda campaigns and by releasing women from jobs to make room for returning men. The thought that women were replacing male pilots, rather than releasing them for more important duties, was undoubtedly as unacceptable to the majority of the American public as the idea of women retaining their positions in factories while men remained unemployed.²⁰⁴ There were no Gallup Polls conducted at the time concerning the issue of the WASPs or working women and so an exact percentage of supporters is not known. Many American women who worked during the war enjoyed their new independence that came from earning a paycheck and many wanted to retain

²⁰² Jacqueline Cochran, Report on Women Airforce Service Pilots, 1 August 1944, Texas Woman's University WASP Collection, Denton, Texas. Mss 265, Byrd Granger Collection, Box 4, 10.

²⁰³ Cochran, Report on Women, 11.

²⁰⁴ Weatherford, *American Women*, 306.

their status as working women, but most lost their jobs as wartime production slowed. Women made up twenty-four percent of the workforce in 1940; although that figure ballooned dramatically during the war, by 1950 women made up only twenty-seven percent of the workforce.²⁰⁵ Quite obviously the lack of dramatic change proves that most women did not retain positions outside of their homes. The WASPs were among the first of tens of thousands of American women who were thanked for the good job, patted on the head (or bottom) and sent home.

Upon the announcement that the WASPs were to be disbanded, the FERD began to take steps to hire the women on an individual basis, just as they did male civilian pilots. The official history explains this by maintaining that "the Ferrying Division did not want to lose a corps of pilots who were rendering an extremely useful service."²⁰⁶ The FERD was still busy ferrying aircraft and could not afford to lose pilots, particularly those qualified to fly pursuit aircraft, regardless of their sex. Arnold quickly squashed the FERD attempt to hire the women individually by declaring that "there will be no repeat no women pilots in any capacity in the Air Force after December twenty...."²⁰⁷ Despite his assertion that the women were effective pilots, and despite the intensity of the Battle of the Bulge beginning in December, General Arnold refused to allow the FERD retain the WASPs in any capacity. Men were available to take the WASP positions, aircraft production had slowed somewhat, and public opinion called for women to return home.

Even Jacqueline Cochran did not advocate retaining the women. In her final report Cochran explained her belief that "all WASP should either stay or, to avoid preference as between commands or individual WASPs, go out of the service altogether." She concurred that the WASP should be inactivated following a late summer 1944

²⁰⁵ Kaledin, *Mothers and More*, 63.

²⁰⁶ Marx, *ATC History*, 167.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

inspection trip to over fifty bases where WASPs were on duty.²⁰⁸ In other words, the FERD lost their WASPs because it was more convenient for Cochran and General Arnold to end the WASP program as a whole than to battle public opinion and AAF infighting to retain them. With the loss of the women in December 1944, the FERD was forced to borrow 161 pilots from other branches of the Air Force to make up for their absence. The majority of the men were not qualified to fly pursuits and had to be trained, creating a backlog of aircraft at the factories. Many of the women saw the problems the FERD would face upon their dismissal. The women at Wilmington and at Long Beach volunteered their services on a dollar a year basis until they were no longer needed.²⁰⁹ Their offer was refused.

The news of disbandment shocked and dismayed many of the women. Violet Cowden (43-4) was stunned by their disbandment. "I was so busy flying that I didn't even know we were being deactivated, not until I came in on Friday and we were deactivated on Saturday. I didn't know. I was too busy flying. I mean here I thought I was winning the war all by myself and somebody told me I wasn't."²¹⁰ Cowden's sentiments were not unique. One WASP from the 6th Ferrying Group wrote to the command at her base that

it is unfortunate that a group so highly trained and skilled can no longer use that skill for the benefit of the Air Forces. With the war still far from over and a very apparent need for trained pilots I personally feel guilty about returning to civilian life where my training can be of no further use in helping to win the war."²¹¹

Despite the continuing need for the women, the WASP were officially disbanded on December 20, 1944. Jacqueline Cochran reacted to the disbandment in a businesslike manner, writing a fifty-three page report for General Arnold, analyzing the great

²⁰⁸ Cochran, *Final Report*, 48.

²⁰⁹ Marx, *ATC History*, 169; Ringenberg, interview with author, 20 July 1996.

²¹⁰ Cowden, interview with author, 4 August 1996.

²¹¹ Marx, *ATC History*, 170.

experiment of the women pilots. Elaine Harmon (44-9) revealed that Cochran had an emotional reaction to the disbandment as well. Apparently Cochran cried at Class 44-9's graduation, the second from the last Class, because the program was ending.²¹² Her emotional reaction is ironic since she played such an important role in the WASP disbandment, but indicates that she had mixed feelings about the end of the experiment to which she had devoted so much time and energy for more than two years of her life. On December 7, 1944, at the graduation of the "lost last class", Class 44-10, General Arnold spoke favorably of the WASPs. Only thirteen days before their deactivation, Arnold reassured the women that, thanks to their efforts, the experiment had been a success. "In training, in safety operations, your showing is comparable to the overall record of the AAF flying within the continental United States," Arnold said.²¹³

Commendations from generals to whose commands you have been assigned are constantly coming across my desk. These commendations record how you have buckled down to the monotonous, the routine jobs which are not desired by our hot-shot young men headed toward combat or just back from an overseas tour. In some of your jobs I think they like you better than men.²¹⁴

General Arnold concluded: "so on this last graduation day, I salute you and all WASP. We of the AAF are proud of you; we will never forget our debt to you."²¹⁵

Arnold's speech, given to not only the graduating class but also to hundreds of WASPs who returned to Sweetwater for the final graduation, was bittersweet. The same man who had announced their disbandment was declaring his debt to them. From their humble beginning, to fighting their way into pursuit planes, to losing in Congress, the

²¹² Harmon, interview with author, 19 July 1996.

²¹³ General Henry "Hap" Arnold, Address to last WASP Class 44-10, 7 December 1944. Texas Woman's University WASP Collection, Denton, Texas. Mss 266, Box 3, Jean Hixson's file.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

WASPs had continued to do their jobs because they thought they were helping their nation in its time of need. Arnold was telling them thanks for the help, now go home.

The availability of a new pool of male pilots, namely the Civil Aeronautics Administration's War Training Service instructors, was the first real challenge to the existence of the WASPs. The shift in the war in favor of the Allies during the summer of 1944 exacerbated public feelings toward women retaining jobs at the expense of men, tightening the noose. Jacqueline Cochran's and General Henry H. Arnold's acceptance of the trend to remove women from their positions as soon as men were available was the final blow to the WASPs. Cochran and Arnold may have been realistic about the lack of permanent change in the attitude of the American public toward women, and the inability of women to fight successfully to retain their jobs. Regardless, the Ferrying Division and the WASP who flew for it recognized a loss; a loss of trained pilots and a loss of opportunity to do what they were good at, flying, to help with the war effort.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

As the WASPs dejectedly packed their bags in December 1944, many did not know what they would do next. They had agreed to serve with the WASP for the duration of the war, and in December the war was definitely still in full force. Some of the women joined the WACS, many joined the Red Cross, and others went home and cried until they figured out what to do with themselves. A majority of the women did not understand why they were being disbanded and many believed they must have done something wrong. Contrary to their fears, the WASP were a significant part of the American war effort, and important in women's efforts toward equality.

The success of the WASP experiment was apparent before they were even officially disbanded. General Tunner and the FERD's efforts to hire the WASPs as individuals is evidence that they believed the WASPs were effective and important as ferry pilots. The goals in originally hiring the women were to discover if women were capable of serving as pilots in time of national emergency, to release men for more vital duties, and to decrease the AAF's demand for "the cream of the overall manpower pool," namely the physically and mentally perfect young men they demanded as their pilots.²¹⁶ These objectives were reached. The women filled over one thousand spots as pilots that would have been filled by men if they had not existed. Those one thousand men could have gone to either the European Theater or the Pacific Theater as pilots of bombers or pursuits, or as leaders of men on the ground. The one thousand men could have been used as crews in one hundred bombers that may not have been filled without the WASP. There is no way of knowing which men would have been tied to the American continent and what became

²¹⁶ Cochran 2, 2.

of them as a result of their freedom. It is safe to say that the release of that many men from continental duty did make a difference in the American war effort.

In addition to releasing men, the duties the WASPs carried out were significant in themselves. Within the FERD the WASP delivered 12,652 aircraft some 9,227,261 miles, and over 89,000 hours.²¹⁷ They flew everything from light trainers to heavy pursuits. Because the women flew with such diligence and caution, planes were efficiently moved from their factories to points of debarkation for the fronts. WASPs in other parts of the AAF completed other important jobs directly relevant to the war effort. Some of the women towed targets to train gunners on the ground, while others towed targets to train aerial gunners. WASPs flew bombers in which they helped train navigators and bombardiers, whose skills were vital to successful bombing in Europe and eventually Japan. The short-term accomplishments of relieving men for duty, efficient ferrying and training of men for a variety of roles, prove the WASPs were effective pilots and important to the war effort, but they were significant in the long-term as well.

One of the original purposes of the women's pilot program was to discover if women could be effectively used as pilots in case of national emergency. The WASPs vigorously proved that they could be counted on. In his address to the final graduating class, General Arnold commended them for a job well done and then maintained that "if the need had developed for women to fly our aircraft overseas, I feel certain that the WASP would have performed that job equally well."²¹⁸ Although his statement is somewhat ironic since it was Arnold who stopped Love and Gillies from flying across the Atlantic in 1943, it does not necessarily mean that he was insincere. The fragility of the women's experiment could not have withstood the public outcry if a crew of women pilots had been lost at sea without the war justifying the risk. The WASPs stepped into the non-

²¹⁷ ATC History, appendix 1; 2, 3, 4.

²¹⁸ Arnold, Address, 2.

traditional role of flying military aircraft and performed as well as the men. Although the accident rate of the women in the Ferrying Division was slightly higher than that of the men, the high number of pursuit aircraft flown by the women diminishes the significance of their higher rate. Their training at Sweetwater, Texas proved that women were not too soft or too high-strung to be successfully trained in a military environment. The women marched, did calisthenics, went to ground school, and flew every day possible. They emerged from Sweetwater with the same training, with the exception of aerial combat and formation training, as the AAF's male cadets, and performed well as working pilots. This training for women was a first, and many of today's Air Force women look to the WASPs and their success as the precursor to their own opportunities.

The WASP's transition into advanced pursuit and, in some cases, four-engine bombers belied the fears that women would only be able to fly light aircraft safely. Both the United States' Army Air Force and the Air Transport Auxiliary in Great Britain initially limited women to ferrying only trainers. Both groups of women proved, through hard work and perseverance, that women were indeed capable of flying the heaviest, fastest, and most sophisticated aircraft of the day. The legacy of their abilities is obvious because the women pilots of today fly everything from the fastest fighters to the heaviest tankers. The WASPs did it first in the United States and proved that women could do what had to be done.

WASPs did an effective job of flying for the AAF and proved the abilities of women as pilots, but they were still sent home. The shift in the war in favor of the Allies, the attack from the unemployed male pilots, and the negative attitudes of the American public toward women replacing men rather than releasing them, all contributed to the WASP disbandment. Commanding General Henry "Hap" Arnold and WASP Director Jacqueline Cochran were unwilling or unable to fight all of the above factors to attempt to save the WASP. The WASP experiment ended relatively quietly in December 1944, and

an amazing shift in the media's attitude toward the women even enabled them to leave with the press praising their work.²¹⁹ Despite the friendly farewell, very few of the WASPs were able to find jobs in the aviation field despite their obvious experience, primarily because men were already coming home who had served as pilots in the war, and no one would give a job to a female pilot as long as one male veteran was out of work. The dilemma of competing with men for jobs, a primary cause in the WASP disbandment, was not the WASPs' dilemma alone. Tens of thousands of American women who tasted the independence and sense of accomplishment that came with working and earning good money, were soon to be relegated back to their kitchens or offices. The jobs that before the war were traditionally held by men were given back to the men when they returned from the war. Women were fired from their jobs, regardless of their skills, in order to give men a place.²²⁰ The WASP disbandment was just the first of many examples of women being replaced in favor of men, for the sole reason of their sex.

Few of the WASPs are bitter today about their unceremonious departure from the AAF. Many still express frustration at not being able to complete their job, but most remember their experience in the WASP as the greatest adventure of their lives. They were helping their nation in its time of need and they flew some of the greatest airplanes ever made. The WASPs were finally recognized as having been a part of the Army Air Force after a fierce battle in Congress over thirty years after the first push for militarization failed. The American Legion and other veteran's groups came out against the WASPs' struggle for veteran's benefits, but the women had learned their lesson. Intense lobbying and educating of those who were not sure who the WASPs were ended with President Jimmy Carter signing the bill providing veteran's status to the WASP in

²¹⁹ "To Honor Wasps at Disbanding," *New York Times*, 5 December 1944, 21;
"Future Predicted for Women Fliers," *New York Times*, 2 November 1944, 16.

²²⁰ Weatherford, *American Women*, 307.

November 1977.²²¹ The women were finally recognized as having been a very important part of the Army Air Force's efforts to win World War II.

Comraderie with fellow WASPs is among the first things many WASPs cite as among the best parts of their experience. They still gather regularly and remember what they did and revel in one another's company. Although they are in their seventies and eighties, when they are together an energy flows through them all, and it is easy to imagine them as twenty-five year olds, fresh out of college and climbing into the cockpit of an AT-6. When asked what they think the WASP should be remembered for most, many said that they served their country in its time of need. Then, with a bright gleam in their eyes, they say that they were the first. All women aviators owe a debt of homage to the WASPs as the first group of women to smash through the glass ceiling and into military aviation.

²²¹ Keil, *Wonderful Women*, 348.

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Questionnaires created by the author and in the author's possession, were completed by the following:

Ammerman, Esther Meuller.

Bosca, Caro Bayley.

Bergemann, Clarice Isabel Siddall.

Brown, Louise Bowden.

Carder, Mildred Eckert.

Carpenter, Martha McKenzie.

Engle, Mary Edith.

Felker, Phyllis Sally Tobias.

Fitzpatrick, Gene Shaffer.

Frenzel, Anna Marguerite Logan.

Gilman, Margaret Werber.

Goodman, Lillian Epsberg.

Goodrum, Jeannette Gagnon

Hansen, Mary Breidenbach.

Harmon, Elaine Danforth.

Hodgson, Marion Foster Stegeman.

Lent, Kristin Swan.

McCreery, Marguerite Jean Terrell Moreo.

Nicholas, Elizabeth Pettitt.

Park, Francie Meisner.

Morrison, Jane E.

Reynolds, Muriel Rath.

Tamplin, Margaret Chamberlain.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

ORIGINAL TWENTY-FIVE WAFS

NAME	FLIGHT HOURS UPON EMPLOYMENT
Nancy Harkness Love	1234
Betty H. Gillies	1395
Cornelia C. Fort	1000
Aline H. Rhonie	2627
Helen M. Clark	570
Adela R. Scharr	706
Esther L. Nelson	1429
Teresa D. James	532
Barbara E. Poole	1800
Helen Richards	975
Barbara Towne	841
Gertrude Meserve	574
Florene A. Miller	1950
Barbara J. Erickson	n/a
Delphine Bohn	n/a
Barbara Donahue	n/a
Evelyn G. Sharp	n/a
Phyllis N. Burchfield	n/a
Esther J. Manning	n/a
Nancy E. Batson	n/a
Katherine R. Thompson	n/a
Dorothy I. Fulton	n/a
Opal Ferguson	n/a
Bernice Batten	n/a
Dorothy F. Scott	n/a

* information gathered from *History of the Air Transport Command: Women Pilots in the Air Transport Command*, pages 30-31.

* the women are listed in order of employment.

APPENDIX TWO

OFFICE OF RESEARCH: APPROVAL OF FORM B

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE



04/15/96

Office of Research
404 Andy Holt Tower
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-0140
PHONE: (423) 974-3466
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IRB # : 5011 B

Title : The Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II

Landdeck, Katherine
History
1101 McClung Tower
Campus

Becker, Dr. Susan
History
1101 McClung Tower
Campus

Your project listed above was reviewed. It qualified for expedited review and has been approved.

This approval is for a period ending one year from the date of this letter. Please make timely submission of renewal or prompt notification of project termination (see item #3 below).

Responsibilities of the investigator during the conduct of this project include the following:

1. To obtain prior approval from the Committee before instituting any changes in the project.
2. To retain signed consent forms from subjects for at least three years following completion of the project.
3. To submit a Form D to report changes in the project or to report termination at 12-month or less intervals.

The Committee wishes you every success in your research endeavor. This office will send you a renewal notice on the anniversary of your approval date.

Sincerely,

Steven B. Pulik
Coordinator of Compliances

cc: Dr. Russell Buhite

VITA

Katherine Sharp Landdeck was born in Des Moines, Iowa on May 15, 1970. She attended schools in the public system of Millard, Nebraska and Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, where she graduated from Broken Arrow Senior High School in June, 1988. She entered University of Tulsa in August, 1988 and transferred to University of Arkansas at Little Rock in August, 1989 where she was an NCAA Division I soccer player. She graduated with honors in May, 1992 with a Bachelor of Arts in both History and Political Science. After teaching for the associate degree program at Spartan School of Aeronautics in Tulsa, Oklahoma for eighteen months, she moved to Michigan and became an assistant manager at The Athlete's Foot. She entered the Master's program in History at the University of Tennessee in August 1995. The master's degree was received May, 1997.