



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) Collection

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2022

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | National Air and Space Museum Archives |
| Title: | Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) Collection |
| Date: | 1944-1982 (bulk 1944-1949) |
| Identifier: | NASM.1987.0077 |
| Creator: | Haydu, Bernice Falk |
| Extent: | 0.2 Cubic feet (1 letter document box, partial) |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | During World War II, members of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) ferried planes, towed anti-aircraft artillery training targets, flew tracking, simulated bombing missions, performed radio control, flight tested aircraft, gave instrument instruction and performed many other duties. Their work allowed more men to participate in aviation combat roles. Bernice Falk Haydu (1920-2021) was a member of WASP class 44-7. This collection contains yearbooks, membership rosters, songbooks, photographs, correspondence, etc. from her WASP career. |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Bernice Falk Haydu, Gift, 1987, NASM.1987.0077

Preferred Citation

Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) Collection, NASM.1987.0077, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

With the entry of the United States into World War II, many American women pilots longed to volunteer their skills to serve their country but were barred from flying for the US military due to their gender. Some American women pilots, including well-known racing pilot Jacqueline "Jackie" Cochran, had already offered their services to the British

Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA), ferrying aircraft from the manufacturers to and between air bases and freeing up male Royal Air Force (RAF) pilots for other duties. Cochran's experience with the ATA led her to lobby long and hard for a similar organization in the US. Initially, two organizations were formed to allow American women pilots to participate in the war effort. On September 10, 1942, the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS), consisting of commercially licensed women pilots under the leadership of Nancy Harkness Love, was created as part of the US Army Air Corps' Air Transport Command. On November 16, 1942, a women pilot training program designed to supply pilots for the WAFS was begun under Cochran's leadership as the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD). Initially based at Howard Hughes Municipal Airport in Houston, Texas, the WFTD was soon moved to Avenger Field at Sweetwater, Texas. On August 5, 1943, the WAFS and the WFTD were merged to form the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), with Cochran as director of the WASP and its training division and Love as director of the ferrying division. Between November 17, 1942, and December 7, 1944, the 1,074 women who earned WASP wings flew 60 million miles for the US Army Air Corps. From light aircraft, the WASPs advanced quickly to fly every type of Air Corps aircraft in use at the time. Except for aerial gunnery and formation flying, these women received the same training as the male pilots. WASPs ferried planes, towed anti-aircraft artillery training targets, flew tracking, simulated bombing missions, performed radio control, flight tested aircraft, gave instrument instruction and performed many other duties. Their work allowed more men to participate in aviation combat roles.

Bernice Falk Haydu (1920-2021) was a member of WASP class 44-7. Known as Bee Falk at the time, she volunteered for the civilian Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) in early 1944 because she loved flying and wanted to help the war effort. She trained for seven months at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas, where she logged 210 hours in various aircraft. She went on to serve at Pecos Army Airfield as an engineering test pilot and a utility pilot before the WASP program was canceled in December 1944. After the war, she worked as a freelance flight instructor, ferry pilot, and later owned a Cessna dealership and flight school. Haydu served as president of the WASP alumni association, Order of the Fifinella, between 1975-78, spearheading efforts for recognition for the WASP. In 1977, the WASP were granted military veteran status. Haydu was one of three surviving WASP to stand beside President Obama in 2009 as he awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to the WASP for their service during World War II.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains documents from Bernice Falk Haydu's career with the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). Materials include yearbooks, membership rosters, songbooks, photographs, correspondence and calling cards, and Falk's civilian employee pass for Pecos Army Air Field.

Arrangement

Arranged by type of material.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Aeronautics, Military
- Miss Fifinella (Fictitious character)
- Women and the military
- Women in aeronautics
- World War, 1939-1945

World War, 1939-1945 -- Aerial operations

Types of Materials:

- Newsletters
- Photographs
- Rosters
- Songbooks

Names:

- Avenger Field -- Sweetwater, TX
- Cochran, Jacqueline
- Haydu, Bernice Falk
- United States. Army Air Forces
- United States. Army. Air Corps
- Women Airforce Service Pilots (U.S.)

Container Listing

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|------------------------------|--|
| Box 60 (Shared), Folder 1 | WASP Yearbook: 2563 AAF Base Unit 44-W-7, Avenger Field, Sweetwater, Texas, 1944 |
| Box 60 (Shared), Folder 2 | WASP Yearbook: 318th AAFFTD (Army Air Forces Flying Training Detachment), 1943 |
| Box 60 (Shared), Folder 3 | WASP Membership Rosters, 1945-1972 |
| | WASP Membership Roster, 1945 |
| | WASP Membership Roster, 1949 |
| | WASP Membership Roster, 1964 |
| | WASP Membership Roster, 1971-1972 |
| | WASP Membership Roster, 1972 |
| Box 60 (Shared), Folder 4 | WASP Membership Rosters, 1973-1982 |
| | WASP Membership Roster, 1973 |
| | WASP Membership Roster, 1980 |
| | WASP Membership Roster, 1982 |
| Box 60 (Shared), Folder 5 | WASP Songbooks, undated |
| Box 60 (Shared), Folder 6 | Civilian Employee Pass for Pecos Army Air Field, September 25, 1944 |
| Box 60 (Shared), Folder 7 | Photo of Bee Falk, circa 1944 |
| Box 60 (Shared), Folder 8 | Miscellaneous Materials, 1944-1975 |