

# WOMEN AIRFORCE SERVICE PILOTS - WASP

Over 50 years ago, at a time when America was desperate for gasoline, money for war bonds and a few good men, something extraordinary happened.

1,830 young women pilots from all over America quit their jobs and left the safety of their homes and families to come to Texas. Some came by car, some by bus, others hitched or rode the train, a few even came by plane, but they all paid their own way. They came to Texas because their country needed them. They came to Texas because they loved to fly.

The WASP were a unique corps of young women pilots, trained to fly "the Army way" by the U.S. Army Air Force at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas. After completing months of military flight training, 1078 of them earned their wings and became WASP, Women Airforce Service Pilots, *the first women in history to fly American military aircraft.*

The WASP were stationed at 120 air bases across the United States, relieving male pilots for combat duty. They flew more than 60 million miles ferrying aircraft from aircraft factories to ports of embarkation and military training bases, towing targets for live anti-aircraft artillery practice and live air-to-air gunnery practice, instructing male pilots, flight testing aircraft, flying night tracking missions and simulated straffing missions, transporting cargo -- in fact, flying every type of mission and every type of aircraft flown by the Army Air Force' male military pilots. Thirty-eight WASP lost their lives while serving their country as military pilots, their bodies sent home in cheap pine boxes at the expense of their family or friends. These heroic women pilots were denied any military benefits or honors--no gold star in the window--not even so much as an American flag to drape their coffins.

Unlike the other women who served and received military benefits during WW II, the WASP were denied that same military status. Thirty-five years after their deactivation, Congress finally recognized their military service and granted them the veteran status they had earned--but without most of the benefits other veterans received.

Regardless of their many accomplishments since their deactivation, the WASP most important legacy is their contribution as military pilots during World War II to ensure the continued freedom of America. Because of the pioneering efforts and the expertise they demonstrated in successfully flying every type of military aircraft, from the fastest fighters to the heaviest bombers, the WASP blazed a trail for the women of future generations to follow. The WASP had proven conclusively that female pilots, when given the same training as male pilots, can fly wingtip to wingtip with their brothers.

## WINGS ACROSS AMERICA

Their legacy is unrivaled,  
their history priceless.

WINGS ACROSS AMERICA is a project to document the history of the WASP and publish it on the World Wide Web in an exciting new electronic format, making it universally available to educate and inspire future generations to become the pioneers of tomorrow.

More than 50 years have passed since World War II, and still much of the WASP history lies buried in the hearts of the women who lived it--untold and unknown. Death has already silenced more than 400 of their voices--their stories lost forever. However, there is hope!  
There are still almost 600 surviving WASP!

With the help of more than 100 PBS stations and outstanding colleges and universities across America, "WINGS ACROSS AMERICA" and Baylor University is creating an unprecedented coalition, working together for one noble cause: to record the stories of the surviving WASP and preserve the history of the contribution of these women pilots to the Allied victory in WWII--before it is too late and their eyewitness accounts are lost forever. The history of their commitment, courage, service, and sacrifice, in the face of formidable challenges during some of America's darkest hours, will be their lasting legacy for this generation and all generations to come.

WINGS ACROSS AMERICA: <http://www.WASP-WWII.org> 254-772-8188

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS TO: WINGS ACROSS AMERICA, PO Box 97180, BAYLOR UNIVERSITY, WACO, TEXAS 76798

**Taken From Women's Hall of Tribute: Located at  
Soldiers & Sailors**

Major Teresa D. James  
United States Air Force  
W.A.S.P  
WW II



Major Teresa James of Wilkinsburg, PA was one of our nation's first WASPs during WWII. A graduate of Wilkinsburg High School, she was raised in Penn Hills, Pennsylvania. Miss James took her first solo flight in 1933 at old Wilkinsburg Airport. She obtained her pilots license in 1934 and her commercial license in 1938.

In 1942, Major James became part of an elite group of 25 women who ferried military planes between the manufacturer and military bases. This prestigious group became known as the Women's Air Force Service Pilots. During the same year she married George "Dink" Martin who was shot down on a mission over France in 1944 while serving in the United States Arm Corps.



In 1950, she returned to the service after accepting a commission in the United States Air Force. After serving for 27 years in commands from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, California and Alaska she retired as Major in 1977.

During her long and distinguished career Major James' greatest accomplishment was that she was instrumental in gaining the introduction of legislation to acknowledge and obtain Veterans Benefits for the WASPs.

