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## Waiting in the Wings: A History of the Women Air Force Service Pilots of World War II

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***Waiting in the Wings:  
A History of the Women Air Force Service Pilots of  
World War II***

Jessica Wilson

Submitted in partial completion of the Master of Arts Degree at

Sarah Lawrence College

May 2015

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## **Acknowledgements**

I never dreamed I would have the honor of attending Sarah Lawrence College. My son, Robert Leleux, is a graduate of Sarah Lawrence. While there, he invited me to join him on a field trip conducted by one of his women's history professors. That professor, Dr. Rona Holub, suggested that I should also attend the Women's History MA program. It had been more than twenty-five years since I had been a student at Texas A&M University, but my son persuaded me that I could make a go of it. I am so grateful to him for his faith in me, and for his support. And, I am grateful to Rona Holub for her encouragement and guidance through the registration process. I am also exceedingly grateful to Dr. Priscilla Murolo for her constant support, and for her endless enthusiasm for teaching women's history. That enthusiasm is infectious and inspirational. Dr. Murolo's encouragement and patience has been essential as I've worked to complete this thesis. I would also, like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Kate Hearst, who was always positive and eager to assist me whenever I needed help. Finally, I must also thank my son-in-law Michael for all of his help and support, especially with editing and computer assistance.

## Preface

I have always admired defiant women, Joan of Arc, Queen Elizabeth I, Margaret Thatcher, Hillary Clinton, and Sissy Farenthold. Each possessed the courage to challenge societal norms. The aforementioned women are famous, and are of course, only a few of the millions who, throughout history, have dared to confront the traditions of patriarchy. In 1942, the WASPs answered the call of duty, and became the first women to fly military aircrafts. Promised militarization, they were the bravest pilots in the AAF, flying planes that male pilots refused to fly, and never complained about their workload or unfavorable working conditions. After exceeding all measure of their assigned tasks, they were vilified and disbanded before the war's end, without thanks, recognition, or militarization. This injustice, inflicted in 1944, is the subject of my thesis.

## **Abbreviations**

AAF	Army Air Forces
AAB	Air Force Base
ANC	Army Nurse Corp
ATA	Air Transport Auxiliary
ATC	Air Transport Command
CAA	Civil Aeronautics Administration
NNC	Navy Nurse Corp
OWI	Office of War Information
SPARS	Semper Paratus (Always Ready)
V-E Day	Victory in Europe
V-J Day	Victory in Japan
WAC	Women's Army Corp
WAFS	Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron
WASP	Women's Airforce Service Pilots Service
WAVES	Women's Accepted for Volunteer Emergency
WMC	War Manpower Commission

## **Abstract**

This thesis addresses the history of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) of World War II who were the first women to fly aircraft for the United States military. The thesis explains the reason and the process by which the WASP's organization was created and its indispensable contribution to the war effort. Also, it explores the reasons why every other women's auxiliary was approved by Congress for militarization except the WASPs. Finally, the thesis offers evidence that the WASP's quest to be militarized was doomed from the start due to the fact that, like the WASPs, all female war workers were denied nontraditional jobs after the war ended.

## Introduction

### Unacknowledged

I wanted to start my Introduction, with the title, The Forgotten Heroines of World War II, simply because it would have sounded better; but the word “forgotten” would not have been appropriate. The word “forgotten” implies one has been recognized in the first place. The Women’s Air Force Service Pilots, or WASPs, were never acknowledged, thanked, recognized, or militarized for their services during World War II. I first became aware of the WASPs when I viewed a thirty- minute program explaining their contribution during the war effort, on the History Channel. In 1972, my major was history at Texas A&M University and in all of my history books, there was never any mention of the WASPs. I find this most disturbing, since in these history books, they *did* mention “Rosie the Riveter” and the massive propaganda campaign used to encourage millions of women to replace enlisted men, then absent from the factories. There were many World War II films that glamorized nurses’ selfless efforts to save wounded men; women in military uniforms typing away in offices for their male officer bosses; or worried wives at home taking care of their newborn babies. It took over twenty years for the WASPs to get a thirty-minute program on the History Channel.



Finally, in 2012, I was accepted into the Graduate Program in Women's History at Sarah Lawrence College. This was the perfect opportunity to research the WASPs and to discover the reason why our government refused to militarize the WASPs, or make public not only their amazing contribution to our country, but also their courage to enter a nontraditional occupation in the military.

I researched the story of the WASPs for three years, and the more I read, the angrier I became. I discovered a much darker story that revealed a struggle that the WASPs experienced in 1943 that still exists to this day. It is discouraging that in 2015, over seventy years later, women are still fighting the same sex discrimination, as the WASPs did in the 1940s. There are many different theories that explain why the WASPs were never militarized. It was not until my third year of research, that I discovered the truth behind their dismissal.

### ***Historical Summary of the WASPs***

By 1943, the War Department had concluded that it was imperative that government armament factories hire women to offset male shortages due to the draft. Intent on always being prepared for any emergency, the War Department authorized an auxiliary to confirm whether women could also fly aircraft for the military. The operation was called "The Experiment" and was to remain top secret, due to the fact that the venture could result in the deaths of many women

pilots. The military was taking no chances in what could become a publicity nightmare. The idea was to allow women to fly domestic flights, which would free all available male pilots for combat duty. The Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASPs) formed in July of 1943 under the direction of flying ace, Jacqueline Cochran. As chief of the Army Air Force (AAF), a skeptical General Henry ("Hap") Arnold's objective was for the program to achieve three goals: to see if women could serve as military pilots; if so, to form an expanded organization, to release male pilots for combat; and to decrease demand on top men in the manpower pool of civilian male pilots.<sup>1</sup>

Cochran, an award winning pilot, always believed that women could fly as well as men. In order to prove her point, Cochran's requirements for WASPs were more challenging than those for their male counterparts. For example, unlike the AAF cadets, in order to be chosen to train to fly the "Army Way" women had to be licensed pilots with thirty-five hours of flying time, and have a high-school diploma. WASPs were to receive the exact same training as men in the AAF.

In 1944, the AAF submitted a bill to Congress to allow militarization of the WASP program. Every WASP, including Cochran, was confident that Congress would pass legislation to militarize the program due to its stellar performance.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots of World War II*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

Not since Pearl Harbor had Congress rejected a request from the AAF.<sup>3</sup> The WASPs believed that their documented records would speak for themselves. But their incomparable professionalism was not acknowledged. In spite of their unparalleled performance, after only two years of service by the WASPs Congress rejected militarization, and the program was disbanded on December 20, 1944, eight months before the end of the war.

### ***Historiography***

For more than seventy years, many authors have investigated “The Experiment,” and have offered their opinions on why the WASPs were disbanded. Molly Merryman’s *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women’s Air Force Service Pilots of World War II* (1997) addresses these questions: Why were the WASPs disbanded while the nation still needed their services? Why did Congress fail to acknowledge the WASP’s indispensable contributions? Why did Congress authorize the Women’s Army Corps (WACs), Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES), the Women’s Marines, and the Women’s Coast Guard (SPARS), Army Nurses Corp (ANC), Navy Nurses Corp (NNC), but fail to militarize the WASPs?

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 81-82.

Merryman answers these questions by explaining that the WASPs were victimized by a media blitz, perpetrated by the male civil service pilots and members of Congress. The women were wrongly accused of lacking professionalism, taking jobs away from male pilots who were returning home from the war, and wasting taxpayer's money. Merryman's argument is that the underlying reason behind the WASPs' disbandment was that the culture of the U. S. government and the military in 1944 was opposed to women taking jobs that were coveted by men.

Merryman offers a formidable reenactment of the WASP's tumultuous opposition to the on the floor of Congress—led by Robert Ramspeck of Georgia. She explains that the WASPs' excellent performance was a matter of record. Arnold had explained to Congress that the WASPs were not taking away jobs from AAF pilots, and that to disband the WASPs would cost the taxpayers millions of dollars.

*Nancy Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II* (2008) by Sarah Byrn Rickman renders another view entirely. It asks the question, was Jacqueline Cochran's unpopularity with the people on Capitol Hill and the military the cause of the WASPs' disbandment? It is Rickman's opinion that the reason the WASPs failed to be militarized was Jacqueline Cochran's mismanagement of the WASPs, her unpopularity among Washington bureaucrats, and her alienation of Air Force constituents. This author offers a personal and compelling look into the rivalry

between the two most powerful women who influenced the creation of the WASPs: Nancy Harkness Love and Jacqueline Cochran. Cochran's aggressive manner alienated the very people whose support she most needed, especially the Air Transport Command, Nancy Harkness Love, who had been the commander of the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) since 1940, and Oveta Culp Hobby.<sup>4</sup> Considered one of the most powerful women in Washington, Hobby was hand-picked by General George Marshall to create the Women's Army Corp (WAC), and serve as its director.<sup>5</sup> Love had presented a request to allow women to ferry aircraft for the military that had preceded Cochran's. But Cochran used her political influence to nose Love out of the top position. Love was married to an Army Air Force pilot and popular among her peers. It was not long before most of the officers in the military saw Cochran as ruthless and antagonistic. The military upheld a double standard that expected women to maintain their femininity, while aggressive behavior was considered a commendable trait only in men.

*Those Wonderful Women in their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (1979) by Sally Van Wagenen Keil, presents another perspective in determining Cochran's role. If Cochran had pushed for militarization earlier, when the military was desperate for pilots—she might have assured

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<sup>4</sup> Sarah Byrd Rickman, *Nancy Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2008), 87.

<sup>5</sup> Vanessa A. Crockford, Maj., U.S. Army, "Oveta Culp Hobby and her "Lieutenants": A Transformational Leadership in Action in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps of World War II" (MA thesis, Charlottesville, Virginia: The U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's School, 1998), 24.

militarization. Would it have made a difference if the American public had been made aware of the WASPs' existence through hero-making publicity, so that the WASPs could have acquired a following? Keil is of the opinion that the WASPs could not break through American society's impenetrable wall of discrimination and sexism. There was a double-edged sword where publicity was concerned. What if "The Experiment" had failed, creating a detrimental image of women's capability to take on the same tasks as men? Cochran advised Arnold to maintain the WASPs at civilian status, until their results were documented.<sup>6</sup> Keil makes the point that the male civilian pilots feared that they were going to be replaced by the WASPs. If that had occurred, they would have lost their draft-deferment status, and would have been immediately drafted into the walking army for the projected invasion of Japan. Therefore, the civil service pilots were vehemently opposed to the WASPs' militarization. Arnold explained this situation to Congress's Military Affairs Committee, and called the civil service men cowards.<sup>7</sup> When Congress and the media were made aware of the true nature of the Civil Aeronautics Administration's (CAA) pilots' protests, why were they not mortified by their lack of patriotism?

Jean Hascall Cole's *Women Pilots of World War II* (1992) is a primary source that gives a voice to the women in her flight training class and reveals that the

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<sup>6</sup> Sally Ann Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Rawson, Wade Publisher, Inc., 1979), 296.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

common expectation was that they would be militarized. She also discloses the discriminatory behavior that male instructors displayed towards them. In addition, she speaks frankly about the numerous acts of sabotage that resulted in death.<sup>8</sup> Her book provides an inside look at the glaring hatred that most Air Force personnel held for the WASPs.

Another primary source, *A WASP Among Eagles* (1999) by Anne B. Carl, offers a different and personal perspective about WASP training and flying, and the dismal atmosphere created by the AAF pilots. Carl also reveals that she could not complain for fear that she would be regarded as a “typical female who was too sensitive, emotional and therefore, unsuited to perform a man’s job.”<sup>9</sup> Typical about this quote is that most of the WASPs admitted that they were silent and endured the abuse because they were afraid they would lose the jobs they loved.

*Dear Mother and Daddy: World War II Letters Home from a WASP* (2005) by Marie Mountain Clark, offers insight into the day-to-day training of a WASP.<sup>10</sup> Her book reveals the inadequate living conditions that these women endured to become pilots for the military, but never complained.

Important government documents at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, including the World War II papers of General Arnold, provide further proof of

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<sup>8</sup> Jean Hascall Cole, *Women Pilots of World War II* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1992). 45.

<sup>9</sup> Ann B. Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1999). 96.

<sup>10</sup> Marie Mountain Clark, *Dear Mother and Daddy: World War Letters Home From a WASP* (Livonia, Michigan: First Page Publications, 2005). 12

my thesis. The primary source offered evidence that the Army Air Force lied to the WASPs by giving false information regarding the reason for their disbandment.

In addition I interviewed several veterans of the WASPs who gave me inside information regarding their experiences at that time. I asked them, why they thought that despite their excellent record, they were denied militarization? Most of them said that the failure to militarize it was due to sex discrimination. A few thought it was because their services were no longer needed.

The saga of the Women's Air Force Service Pilots has been analyzed by many scholars who have offered a variety of explanations for their disbandment. I have arrived at an alternative theory. ***There was never any possibility the U.S. government was going to allow the WASPs to be militarized. That plan was doomed from the start because women who did "men's work" during the war would not be allowed to maintain those jobs when the war was over.*** In 1942, the Office of War Information initiated the greatest propaganda machine in history when it inspired women's work force numbers to rise from eleven million to twenty million.<sup>11</sup> The War Department erroneously surmised that at war's end, the married women among these war workers would return home to care for husbands returning from war and raise families. In other words, pre-

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<sup>11</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 1.



war arrangements would resume. The husband would return to his job, and the wife would quit her stand-in position.<sup>12</sup> What the War Department had not counted on was that almost eighty percent of those women did not wish to quit.<sup>13</sup> The government quickly contravened the growing trend, and once again turned to the OWI to execute a new propaganda campaign, this one designed to encourage women to leave their jobs, return home, have children, and take care of the husband returning from war.<sup>14</sup> Magazines carried stories about patriotic women who were eager to begin a life of domestic bliss. Newspapers featured articles about women who were thrilled to quit their jobs and resume a normal life. Hollywood produced movies about the challenges the returning soldier face while adjusting to civilian life, such as *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *Pride of the Marines*. Employers either dismissed the women they employed, or were able to encourage them to quit by lowering their salary, or assigning them to an undesirable position that men did not want.<sup>15</sup> Only women in traditionally female jobs, secretaries, nurses, housekeepers, clerks, and teachers, could count on keeping them.

Chapter One, "...a weapon waiting to be used.", explains the reason and purpose the WASPs were created. It introduces the major players and their

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<sup>12</sup> Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out of Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 287.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>14</sup> Wikipedia, "American Propaganda During World War II," accessed April 6, 2015, <http://www.wikipedia.org/American>.

<sup>15</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 49.

campaign to bring about the history-making venture. Chapter Two, The Quest for Militarization, presents the history of the WASPs struggles to become militarized and the reasons for their failure. Chapter Three, “This is Vegas Baby,” presents further support that the WASPs never had any chance to be militarized under any circumstances.

The WACs, WAVES, SPARS, and Women Marines had succeeded in their bid for militarization because they had been assigned to duties that men did not covet, such as typing, filing, and bookkeeping. The WASPs, however, were taking highly prestigious jobs, mired in danger and risk that offered the highest salaries for entry-level soldiers.

As this, my thesis demonstrates, Congress and the AAF implemented a plan to crush the WASPs once and for all. It is important to reveal the truth behind the WASP disbandment to expose how the U. S. government mistreated women who deserved nothing but accolades.

## Chapter One

*“...a weapon waiting to used.”*

*Eleanor Roosevelt*

“The Experiment” grew into the Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASPs), the first women who would be allowed to fly military aircraft for the United States.<sup>16</sup> The WASPs were also the only women’s auxiliary branch of America’s armed forces not to gain its official military recognition for their service during World War II, and the only women’s auxiliary branch to be dismissed before the war had ended.<sup>17</sup> The story of the WASPs offers a revealing perspective on gender politics during the World War II era—the remarkable new opportunities the United States made available to women at that time, and the reversal of those opportunities.

In the early 1940s, flight was still a pioneering innovation considered both risky and dangerous; therefore, most of America’s pilots were men. The military thought it best to keep “The Experiment,” a daring and startling prospect, under wraps in case the project proved to be embarrassing.<sup>18</sup> Military men were fearful that, if they deliberately placed women in harm’s way, the public’s reaction would be outrage that the military had assigned women to what

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<sup>16</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

many considered a hazardous “male” job.<sup>19</sup> Most people did not travel by air in the 1930s and 40s because it was too expensive, and air travel possessed an aura of peril and mystery—traditionally male provinces. Even so, there were many women who refused to allow flight to be an exclusively male vocation.<sup>20</sup> One of those women was Jacqueline Cochran, an award-winning aviatrix, famous for her first-place finish in the prestigious Bendix Race in 1938, in which she defeated male competitors.<sup>21</sup> In 1939, when World War II broke out in Europe, Cochran had the foresight to realize that it was only a matter of time before America would be drawn in. It was her idea to train women in the exact same way that AAF cadets were trained, the “Army Way,” so that women pilots could take over noncombat domestic flights.<sup>22</sup> Upon returning home from Europe, Cochran’s husband, Fred Oldlum, who was a major contributor to Roosevelt’s campaign, arranged for her to meet with President and Mrs. Roosevelt to discuss her idea.<sup>23</sup> She predicted that the United States would be pulled into war, resulting in a shortage of male combat pilots. She also informed the First Lady that England and the Soviet Union already used women pilots in their armies.<sup>24</sup> The President and the First Lady agreed that it was important to allow women to fly for their

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.,44.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>21</sup> Sally Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 44.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 141-142.

<sup>23</sup> Megan B. A. Lotzenhiser, “Without Glory: The Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II” (Waco, Baylor University, 2007), 4.

<sup>24</sup> Sarah Byrn Rickman, *Nancy Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas), 61.

country. In her newspaper column, "My Day," Mrs. Roosevelt emphasized the importance of allowing women to participate in all male occupations explaining, "women pilots are a weapon waiting to be used."<sup>25</sup> When Cochran met with General "Hap" Arnold, the Commander of the Army Air Force, she explained to him that eventually the United States would become involved in the war, instigating a pilot shortage, and that women pilots would be the solution to that problem.<sup>26</sup> She explained to him that she wanted to be the director of a newly-created women's air force training facility to teach women to fly military aircraft comparable to AAF cadet training.<sup>27</sup> General Arnold agreed that *if* the United States became involved in the war, and *if* there was a pilot shortage, he would call her, thinking that her plans were premature and never dreaming that any of it would come to pass. When America was finally forced into World War II, Arnold was faced with a severe pilot shortage, and was pressured by both President Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to create a women's flying organization.<sup>28</sup>

At the start of the war, a derisive Arnold believed that women were not up to the task as they were "too high strung" to serve as pilots, and could potentially

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<sup>25</sup> Sally Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 117.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>28</sup> Harriet Sigerman, ed., Jacqueline Cochran, "Reminiscences of Jacqueline Cochran," *Columbia University Oral History Research Office Collection*: 33-44. *Columbia University History of American Women Since 1941* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 76-79.

discredit the Air Force he had worked so hard to establish.<sup>29</sup> “Frankly, I didn’t know in 1941 whether a slip of a young girl could fight the controls of a B-17 in heavy weather,” he said.<sup>30</sup> However, after witnessing the women pilots’ unprecedented work ethic, outstanding performance, and professionalism, he quickly became their major advocate, stating, “It is not beyond reason to expect that someday all our Air Transport Command ferrying within the United States will be done by women.”<sup>31</sup>

Cochran was anxious to help the war effort and flew to England to study the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) women’s training program, a branch of the Royal Air Force (RAF).<sup>32</sup> She volunteered to find twenty-five women to fly for the British ATA.<sup>33</sup>

Not far from Washington, there was another aviatrix, Nancy Harkness Love, who also believed that women could effortlessly interchange with AAF pilots. Nancy Harkness, the daughter of a wealthy Philadelphia physician, attended a Massachusetts boarding school and Vassar College. She had received her pilot’s license at age sixteen when she began working for Bob Love, owner of an airline

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<sup>29</sup> Nancy Parrish, “Wingtip to Wingtip”: Women in Aviation and the Pioneering WASP,” in *One Hundred Years of Powered Flight 1903-2003*, National Aeronautics and Space Administration author. (Winchester, Virginia: The Winchester Group, 2003), 69-71.

<sup>30</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990) 330.

<sup>31</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 78.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II*, (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 76.

company.<sup>34</sup> Soon, she was flying planes for him and they eventually married. When America entered the war, Bob Love became an AAF pilot.<sup>35</sup> Both he and Nancy Love were well ensconced among the Air Force establishment. After realizing that the commander of Plans Division, Lt. Colonel Robert Olds, a good friend of her husband, was desperate for pilots, Nancy asked him about the possibility of women ferrying airplanes for the Air Transport Command Ferrying Division.<sup>36</sup> The attack on Pearl Harbor threw the AAF into emergency status, and Colonel William H. Tunner, the head of the domestic division's ferrying wing, immediately asked Love to draft a plan for utilizing women pilots and to provide a list of women pilots whom she could recommend.<sup>37</sup> General Harold L. George, the head of the Ferrying Command, submitted the plan to Arnold, and on September 5, 1942, Arnold gave his approval for recruiting women pilots.<sup>38</sup> Love was given the position of Operations Officer for the women's pilots.<sup>39</sup> Hired through Civil Service, the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) was off the runway.<sup>40</sup>

When Cochran returned from England, she met with General Arnold and demanded an explanation as to why Nancy Love had been appointed head of the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>35</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 11-12.

<sup>36</sup> Sarah Byrd Rickman, *Nancy Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2008), 62.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

Ferry Division.<sup>41</sup> Arnold, according to Cochran, claimed that he had asked the Air Transport Command to prepare plans for his review, whereupon he expected to submit them for her (Cochran's) approval. Instead, he explained, the chain of Command had gone over his head and directly to the Secretary of War with the project.<sup>42</sup> He assured her that he had not seen the plan, that it had been activated without his knowledge, and that it did not accord with his own intentions.<sup>43</sup> This was not true, but it is important to reveal because it demonstrates how Arnold often inveigled associates in order to achieve his agenda.<sup>44</sup> At that moment, in 1942, Arnold needed combat pilots and did not worry about the consequences of any action that could help him on that score. Arnold, being pragmatic and strategic, would work out the politics later.<sup>45</sup> Cochran decided to leave the newly formed WAFS "as is," since the Army had publicly announced their formation.<sup>46</sup>

After receiving the go-ahead from "Hap" Arnold, Cochran began to create the flight school that would train new candidates to take over all non-combat domestic flying positions.<sup>47</sup> Nancy Love and Jacqueline Cochran had different ideas on how women could best serve the needs of the military. Cochran wanted

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<sup>41</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 116.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-117.

<sup>43</sup> Sarah Byrd Rickman, *Nancy Harkness Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas, 2008), 80.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 115, 117-118.

<sup>45</sup> Katherine Van Waggenen Keil, *Those Magnificent Women In Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Rawson, Wade Publisher, Inc., 1979), 117.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.



her pilots to attend an air training school to receive the same pilot training as AAF cadets.<sup>48</sup> Love did not think that a flying school was unnecessary.<sup>49</sup> For the time being, Love would be in charge of the ferrying squadron in Wilmington, Delaware, and Cochran would set up her training school in Sweetwater, Texas.<sup>50</sup>

The women of America were fortunate that the Women's Air Force Service Pilots were under the direction of Jacqueline Cochran. Women aviators were extremely rare. She was the first woman to break the sound barrier and to this day, she has broken more records in speed, distance, and altitude than any man or woman in the history of flight.<sup>51</sup> Cochran, by insisting on an Air Force military training program, enabled her graduates to become certified in a variety of planes, thus increasing the range of their assignments and to gain acknowledgment and respect from the AAF.<sup>52</sup>

Cochran had experienced a dismal childhood, characterized by extreme poverty and desperation. As a girl, she had worn a potato sack as a dress, owned no shoes, and slept on the floor. But by the age of thirteen, she had become a beautician, and she later became a nurse, before meeting and marrying millionaire Floyd Oldlum, one of the ten richest men in the world. It was Oldlum

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<sup>48</sup> Amber Dzelzkalns, "From Barnstormers to Military Pilots": The Women Air Force Service Pilots of World War II" (History B. A. Thesis, University of Wisconsin), 17-19.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 17,18.

<sup>50</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 155.

<sup>51</sup> Megan B. A. Lotzenhiser, "Without Glory: The Women Air Force Service Pilots of World War II" (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>52</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 212.

who first encouraged her to take flying lessons. Determined to succeed, she created a highly prosperous cosmetics company, with her husband, and became one of the most accomplished aviators in the United States.

From the outset, Cochran knew that women could fly as well as men. Now she was intent on proving it. She intensified the training for WASP recruits to make sure her program was never accused of compromising military standards.<sup>53</sup> When conducting interviews for candidate selection, she informed the applicants that they were required to be between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five, have graduated from high school, have earned a commercial pilot's license with an 200 hp (horsepower) rating, have logged 500 hours of flight time, and pass a mental and a physical exam.<sup>54</sup> The War Department, though it never established a recruitment campaign, received over 25,000 applications to the WASPs.<sup>55</sup> The applicants chosen were then obligated to attend and pass twenty-seven weeks of flight class and training.<sup>56</sup> During this time they would undergo physical training, along with instruction in aerial photography, ground school math, physics, aerodynamics, electronics, instruments, maintenance, Morse code, radio, map reading, navigation, meteorology, engine operations, military flying,

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<sup>53</sup> Megan B. A. Lotzenhiser, "Without Glory: The Women's Air Force Service Pilots of World War II" (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007), 9.

<sup>54</sup> Katherine Sharp Landdeck, "Experiment in the Cockpit," *The Airplane in American Culture*, ed. Dominick Pisano (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 170.

<sup>55</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 14.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

military regulations, and civilian air regulations.<sup>57</sup> These classes constituted the same training as that given to male cadets, with the exception that women applicants were required to log 500 hours of flight time, and AAF cadets were required to log only 250 hours. Also, male cadets were not required to have high-school diplomas or have acquired any flight time before they joined the AAF.<sup>58</sup> Despite the lower standards to which they were held, graduating male Army Air Force pilots received 350 dollars a month and women pilots received 250 dollars a month.

The Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) training program was officially created in 1943. One thousand and seventy-four women were chosen to fly military aircraft for the AAF.<sup>59</sup> The WASPs were aware of their history-making situation. On their first day of training, the drill instructor, Lieutenant Alfred Fleishman said, "You need to tell yourselves, 'If the army can dish it out, I can take it.' "You are going to fly army ships as part of the first group of women engaged in a war effort doing a man's job, in the history of America."<sup>60</sup> WASPs would awaken at 6:00 am and end their day at 10:00 pm. They were subjected to discrimination by instructors and mechanics, many of whom were embittered

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<sup>57</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Magnificent Women In Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1979), 166.

<sup>58</sup> Megan B. A. Lotzenhiser, "Without Glory: The Women Air Force Service Pilots of World War II" (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007), 10.

<sup>59</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 7.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

rejects from regular Air Force duty.<sup>61</sup> The planes used for training were considered unfit for regular AAF use. There were many near misses, and if not for the WASPs' masterful skills in the cockpit, many women would have lost their lives. WASPs realized they were victims of sabotage when a recruit discovered that her plane's rudder cables had been cut; in another incident, when all of the flight controls came loose in a WASP's hand; and finally, when a WASP crashed to her death after her plane had been sabotaged with "sugar in the fuel tanks."<sup>62</sup> Seven WASPs were killed by sabotage.<sup>63</sup> Despite the danger, the WASPs jumped to volunteer because flying meant so much to them.<sup>64</sup>

The first year into "The Experiment," it was the AAF's consensus that women could fly as well as men.<sup>65</sup> The WASPs, in fact, surpassed the male AAF pilots' performance record in every category, with fewer errors and less sick leave.<sup>66</sup> In fatalities, the WASPs proved to be three times as safe as the AAF.<sup>67</sup> General Arnold was thrilled with the WASPs performance and as far as he was

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<sup>61</sup> Helen P. Schrader, *Winged Auxiliary: Women Pilots in the UK and US During World War II* (London: Pen and Sword Books, 2006), 26.

<sup>62</sup> Jean Hascall Cole, *Women Pilots of World War II* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1992), 45.

<sup>63</sup> Elaine Tyler May, "Pushing the Limits: 1940-1961," *No Small Courage*, ed. Nancy Cott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 79.

<sup>64</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Magnificent Women In Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1979), 232.

<sup>65</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 27

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>67</sup> John Stuart, "The WASPs," *Flying Magazine*, Volume 34. Number 1. January 1944, 148.

concerned, every woman pilot Cochran could give him would help keep his domestic war machine performing at top speed.<sup>68</sup>

Generally, WASPs were given the newest and most dangerous planes as an example to men that it was so easy, a woman can fly them.<sup>69</sup> The male Army pilots did not object to the WASPs' taking over test flights, because every plane had something wrong with it and the men did not wish to take any more risks than they had to.<sup>70</sup> When AAF pilots refused to fly a plane they deemed unsafe, it was called a "morale" problem. The WASPs were routinely called on to solve "morale" problems by flying the plane and thus shaming the men.<sup>71</sup> The WASPs had to be called in to fly the B-26, nicknamed "the Flying Coffin," "the Widowmaker," and "the Dash-Crash." This strategy was used by Colonel Paul Tibbets when a group of contentious male pilots refused to test fly the B-29, also known as "the Superfortress," because they believed that it was, "an unsafe aircraft."<sup>72</sup> This was the plane that was used to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ending the war.<sup>73</sup> Later, Tibbets used WASPs for top-secret missions involved in the Manhattan project.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 268.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>72</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 281.

<sup>73</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

During the WASPs' lifetime, they accrued over sixty million miles of operational flight.<sup>75</sup> In addition to ferrying aircraft, they were qualified to fly seventy-eight different types of planes, to simulate strafing missions, to transport cargo, to fly rocket-propelled and jet propelled planes, to work with radar-controlled targets, and to fly target-towing exercises that provided live anti-aircraft artillery practice.<sup>76</sup> Because they were never militarized, the WASPs had no access to veteran's health insurance or benefits under the GI bill. Of the 1,074 pilots that served, thirty-eight women died in service to their country.<sup>77</sup> The Army denied them military funerals, and would not allow flags to be draped over their coffins.<sup>78</sup> WASPs had to pass the hat to raise money to send bodies home and, in some cases, to pay for funerals.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>76</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 4.

<sup>77</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 8.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 8.

## Chapter Two

***“They promised us. We were positive we would be militarized.”***

***Bernice Faulk***

On June 28, 1943, when Jackie Cochran became director of the newly born Women’s Air Force Service Pilots program, she hired a fashion designer from Bergdorf Goodman in New York to create an entirely new dress uniform in Santiago blue.<sup>80</sup> Her ambition to direct the WASPs – a post that had been promised to her two years earlier – had finally been realized. The next goal was to achieve militarization. Cochran felt that her meticulous preparation would guarantee Congressional legislation to militarize the program. She had documentation that the WASPs had a lower accident rate than male pilots and scored higher in both flight training and ground school.<sup>81</sup> Also, “Hap” Arnold would speak to Congress on the WASPs’ behalf.<sup>82</sup> Since Pearl Harbor, moreover, Congress had never turned down an appeal by any branch of the military, and Secretary of War Henry Stimson sent a letter to Congress and President Roosevelt, urging WASP militarization.<sup>83</sup> Finally, Cochran had the support of

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<sup>80</sup> Sarah Byrd Rickman, *Nancy Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2008), 133.

<sup>81</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>83</sup> Bill Yenne, *Hap Arnold: The General Who Invented the United States Air Force* (Washington, DC: Regency Publishing, Inc., 2013), 219.

both President and Mrs. Roosevelt and the influence of her wealthy husband, Fred Oldham.<sup>84</sup>

From the outset, the AAF looked for ways to militarize the WASPs without going through Congress.<sup>85</sup> Initially, it thought of combining the WASPs with the already militarized WACs, but concluded that their structural differences were insurmountable.<sup>86</sup> The AAF also studied Public Law 38, a one-paragraph bill approved by Congress in April 1943 that authorized female physicians and surgeons to attain the same rank and length of service as their male counterparts.<sup>87</sup> This bill had met great opposition in Congress before it was finally approved, so the AAF abandoned it as a model for militarization.<sup>88</sup>

Colonel Courtney Whitney, the Acting Air Judge Advocate, predicted in 1943 that the WASPs bid for militarization would fail, stating, "Congress is distinctly hostile to legislation of this character. Our own experience in trying to get the Women's Army Corps incorporated into the Army has demonstrated this, and the recent experience of the Navy Department in trying to obtain certain changes in the

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<sup>84</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 54.

<sup>85</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 41.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.



laws pertaining to their women's reserves indicates the same attitude on the part of Congress."<sup>89</sup>

After much study and amendment, Congressman John Costello of California, introduced H.R. 4219, to the House of Representatives on February 17, 1944. The bill called for the militarization of the WASPs.<sup>90</sup> Cochran had high hopes for this initiative. There was no *logical* reason for the WASPs to be denied militarization, but there were impediments that Cochran had failed to factor in.

By 1944, the tide of the war was turning in favor of the Allies. General Arnold had overestimated the number of pilots he was going to need, based on earlier RAF losses.<sup>91</sup> As a result of the unexpectedly low casualty rate among combat pilots, on January 15, 1944, the Civil Aeronautics Administration War Training Service (CAWTS) program for training nonmilitary flying personnel was terminated and the AAF began to cut back on its own pilot training program.<sup>92</sup> This single event had devastating ramifications for the WASPs.

On March 22, 1944, General Arnold spoke before Congress' Military Affairs Committee to testify on the WASPs' behalf.<sup>93</sup> He began by stating that the WASPs were excellent pilots, and more qualified than their male counterparts. He

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>90</sup> Sarah Byrn Rickman, *Nancy Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2008), 173

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 178.

revealed that WASP training was as good as AAF cadet training. Arnold explained that the WASPs did the jobs that male pilots did not wish to do. He also presented strong statistical evidence proving the WASPs' value. The Military Affairs Committee made it clear that it would endorse whatever Arnold recommended, but asked for instruction on how it should address CAA and AAF protests, especially from the 13,000 CAA pilots and instructors who had lost their jobs.<sup>94</sup> Arnold responded by explaining that only one-third of the CAA pilots qualified for the Army Air Force, and the other CAA pilots did not. He confessed to the committee that he preferred the WASPs instead of the male civilian pilots and he assured the committee as a commander in an army of over eight million men that the loss of 13,000 pilots posed no problems.<sup>95</sup> It was Arnold's intention to staff all domestic military missions with WASPs, using the male pilots to increase the Army's ground force or as fly missions overseas.<sup>96</sup> There is strong evidence that Arnold was unequivocally committed to WASP militarization and genuinely believed that HR 4219 would pass. As early as August 1943, he had wired a future member of the WASPs that it was highly probable that the WASPs would be militarized and that if she was not able to

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<sup>94</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 79.

<sup>95</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 293-294.

<sup>96</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 78.

commit to that event, she should not report for training.<sup>97</sup> Secretary of War Henry Stimson's letter in support of the WASPs stated that the Army had a manpower shortage, and that it was necessary to assign women whenever possible.<sup>98</sup> He recognized that the WASPs had a special skill-set necessary to the war effort. Stimson also stated that militarization of the WASPs would not keep a single instructor or partially-trained civilian pilot out of the Air Force.

The U.S. government allowed two departments to fly aircraft; the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) and the Army Air Force (AAF). The pilots that flew for the CAA could fly military aircraft without being in the military. In other words, flying for the CAA entitled pilots to draft deferments. They were paid more and had a less demanding schedule than the pilots who flew in the AAF. Most CAA pilots had no objection to the WASPs when they first came on the scene. But when CAA pilots realized their jobs were going to be terminated, just as the WASPs were petitioning Congress for militarization, suddenly, the WASPs' existence seemed a threat. Not only would the CAA men lose their high-paying jobs, but, worse, they would also lose their draft deferments, making them eligible for service in the walking army's projected invasion of Japan. The termination of the CATSW also meant that CAA flight instructors would be losing

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<sup>97</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 300-301.

<sup>98</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 80-81.

their jobs.<sup>99</sup> Shocked by this sudden turn of events, the CAA, its flight instructors, and veterans' organizations, such as the American Legion, joined forces to destroy the WASPs.<sup>100</sup> AAF cadets, realizing that their training numbers would also be affected joined in the fight as well.<sup>101</sup> Memories of the Great Depression doubtless helped to motivate male pilots to do all they could to hang onto their jobs. The CAA pilots, many of whom had not graduated from high school, were making \$380 dollars while the AAF's pilots \$350 per month.<sup>102</sup>

The negative media attention initiated by CAA and AAF pilots was designed to discredit the WASPs by denigrating their skills and claiming they were receiving preferential treatment from the military.<sup>103</sup> Male pilots claimed that women were flying more frequently than men, and been given better assignments.<sup>104</sup> This was not true; records indicated that WASPs flew slightly less than male pilots.<sup>105</sup> The men also charged the military with wasting thousands of taxpayer dollars to train inexperienced women to take surplus jobs that should rightfully have been given to CAA pilots. They publicly protested that

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<sup>99</sup> Sarah Byrn Rickman, *Nancy Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2008), 179.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 178-179.

<sup>101</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 32.

<sup>102</sup> Katherine Sharp Landdeck, "Experiment in the Cockpit," *The Airplane in the American Culture*, ed. Dominick Pisano (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 168.

<sup>103</sup> Sarah Byrn Rickman, *Nancy Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas, 2008), 179.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

the WASPs had stolen their jobs.<sup>106</sup> By mid-February, it had been a month since the CAA pilots learned their jobs would be terminated. Furious and frantic, they raised enough money to hire lobbyists who effectively presented their grievances to Congress, civilian aviation organizations, veterans' organizations, and most fatefully, to the press.<sup>107</sup>

The complexity of what happened after the CAA pilots began their media blitz becomes clearer in light of internal military documents. Had the Civil Aeronautics Administration pilots really been terminated on January 15? On January 21, a letter to the Office of Defense Transportation on Civil Transportation forwarded to General Arnold from H. H. Hewitt, Lt. Colonel, A.G.D., Assistant Air Adjutant General writes:

Director of Office of Defense Transportation by letter dated 21, January 1944. ASWA and CAA pointed out his responsibilities included domestic air transport and requested comments on report of Truman Committee that additional planes should be assigned to civil air carriers. (1)...much available air traffic is refused carriage but most priority traffic is being moved, (2) airmail carried has doubled, but much is still being refused, and (3) that little more can be done without additional equipment. [and] that (a) twenty-eight planes have been returned to air lines with three additional in process, (b) military requirements will be urgent for several months, (c) some

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>107</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Magnificent Women In Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Rawson, Wade Publisher, Inc., 1979), 298.

relief may then be expected,(d) military scheduled transport is efficient, and troop carrier needs are great.<sup>108</sup>

On January 27, 1944, a second officer wrote:

With the cooperation of the Civil Aeronautics Board and of the carriers, schedules have been provided to carry the priority traffic and long-haul airmail, rather than simply the maximum traffic. Little more can be done along this line except to make changes in the war service pattern from time to time as current traffic flows vary.<sup>109</sup>

Then the letter ends with:

In addition to requirements in the theaters of operation, is a constant demand for airline types of equipment for troop carrier training activities in the United States. The use of these planes in transition training and the flow of new planes through domestic airfields where troop carrier crews, squadrons, and groups are given training as teams prior to movement overseas many give the erroneous impression that large numbers of such planes have permanent assignments to unproductive uses.<sup>110</sup>

This was business as usual. These letters indicate that not only were CAA pilots being used after their so-called termination, but CAA training had continued as well.

In June 1944, Congressman Robert Ramspeck, of Georgia was chairman of the powerful Civil Service Committee, which oversaw civil service components of

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<sup>108</sup> Lt. Col. H. H. Hewitt, "Letter from Lt. Colonel H. H. Hewitt, A.G.D., Assistant Air Adjutant General to the Office of Defense on Civil Air Transportation," *Library of Congress papers of General Henry "Hap" Arnold January 21, 1944*, (Library of Congress Printing, 1960).

<sup>109</sup> Lt. Col. F. D. Butler, "Letter from Lt. Colonel F. D. Butler, Office of Emergency Management, to Mr. Joseph B. Eastman, Office of Defense Transportation," *Library of Congress papers of General Henry "Hap" Arnold, January 27, 1944* (Library of Congress Printing, 1960).

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

the war effort.<sup>111</sup> On behalf of the male CAA pilots, lobbyists approached Ramspeck to seek his assistance in destroying the WASPs.<sup>112</sup> From the start, his mission was to guarantee their failure to militarize and insure their disbandment as well. Meanwhile, CAA pilots aroused a massive mail-writing campaign protesting their unfair treatment, and created a media blitz that not only destroyed any chance for the WASPs' militarization, but also vilified their very existence.<sup>113</sup>

Ramspeck used his influence as chairman of the Civil Service Committee to call for an official investigation of the WASPs.<sup>114</sup> On June 5, 1944, the committee issued a thirteen-page document called the Ramspeck Report.<sup>115</sup> The report presented a litany of protests and half-truths to discredit the WASPs. Facts were often taken out of context and deliberately misrepresented.<sup>116</sup> Because most Congressmen were unaware of their contribution and expertise the Ramspeck Report was able to cause considerable damage to the WASPs' efforts towards militarization.<sup>117</sup> His investigation committee never once visited

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<sup>111</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 82.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>115</sup> Sarah Byrn Rickman, *Nancy Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas, 2008), 197.

<sup>116</sup> 78<sup>th</sup> Congress Session, Interim Report, *Committee on the Civil Service Report: The Ramspeck Report*, June 5, 1944.

<sup>117</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 84.

the Sweetwater training camp or any of the WASP bases.<sup>118</sup> Basically, the committee repeated CAA pilot's complaints regarding gender issues with no references to AAF documentation.<sup>119</sup> The only statistics the CAA pilots volunteered were their thousands totaled in unemployment.<sup>120</sup> The claim that they were forced into unemployment was not true. The Ramspeck report failed to report, for example, that the military had offered the CAA pilots AAF commissions; that is, they had been offered an opportunity to join the Army Air Force, if they met the requirements.<sup>121</sup> The requirements in the AAF were much higher than those for the CAA pilots and General Arnold refused to lower military standards merely to absorb unemployed civilian pilots.<sup>122</sup> The WASPs, however, met all of the AAF's requirements.<sup>123</sup> Those CAA pilots that did not qualify were drafted to serve in the ground forces.<sup>124</sup>

The Rampseck Report became public, feeding the press more stories, which caused an escalation in anti-WASP rhetoric.<sup>125</sup> CAA lobbyists fed a largely male press corps lists of the civil service pilot's grievances. As a result, the newspapers took up their cause, never hearing the WASPs' side of the story. A disgusted General Arnold repeatedly tried to convey the disgraceful truth—that

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 84.



the reason the CAA pilots were protesting so vehemently to keep their jobs was to avoid the draft. Arnold strove to demonstrate the cowardice of the civil service pilots to Congress, but was never able to convey the truth. Somehow, no one seemed to accept this narrative—Congress, the press, and the general public preferred to believe that the WASPs were stealing men’s jobs. Due to the pervasive sexism of the times and the secretiveness of the WASP “experiment,” neither the men in Congress and the general public could imagine that a woman could pilot an aircraft as well as (or better than) a man.<sup>126</sup> The public could never really comprehend the reason for the WASP program, and few people in 1940s America could envision a woman flying a B-17. But they readily understood why the all-male pilots of the CAA were furious after their jobs were terminated, and they were conditioned to believe that male pilots were inherently superior to female pilots.<sup>127</sup>

Compounding this prejudice was the public relations policy adopted by the AAF regarding the WASPs.<sup>128</sup> The AAF continued to keep the WASP’s program a closely guarded secret even after it had proved to be a success.<sup>129</sup> Because of the secrecy, the public, the media, and Congress remained oblivious

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 29.

regarding the WASPs' accomplishments, and expertise, especially in contrast to the male pilot's operations.<sup>130</sup>

Perhaps the worst press attacks on the WASPs came from Drew Pearson, in his syndicated column "The Washington Merry-Go-Round."<sup>131</sup> He insinuated that the real reason that Cochran was able to become director of the WASPs was because she and General Arnold were having an affair.<sup>132</sup> The column's readers could easily intuit the implication that the only way women could attain success was through seduction, that they could never succeed by virtue of their own skill and merit.<sup>133</sup> Pearson viciously attacked the WASPs on behalf of the CAA pilots, claiming that America had turned her back on them and that the WASPs were selfish women hoarding jobs that rightfully belong to men. To make matters worse, Pearson also had a weekly radio program, on which he regularly advocated the cause of the CAA pilots.

In 1944, most reporters covering the WASPs seemed committed to the idea that women should return to traditional female duties as soon as the war ended.<sup>134</sup> The WASPs were perceived as usurpers of male turf. Most media outlets expressed the hope that they would quit their jobs, making way for the

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>131</sup> Drew Pearson, "Arnold Faces Uproar over his Continued use of WASPs," *Washington Daily News*, August 5, 1944.

<sup>132</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 72.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>134</sup> Sarah Byrd Rickman, *Nancy Harkness Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas, 2008), 203.

men.<sup>135</sup> The same fear of bad publicity that had prompted the Army to keep “The Experiment” a secret now militated against the WASPs’ militarization and, ultimately, the program’s survival. The Army favored militarization only if there was to be no public backlash. When the CAA pilots and flight instructors began their protests, the military believed that the turmoil would dissolve once the public learned they were attempting to avoid the draft.<sup>136</sup> But AAF pilots released from duty joined the CAA pilots’ dissent when they discovered that the WASPs would be flying the newest, largest, fastest, planes off the line, and that they would be losing flight pay in the process.<sup>137</sup>

Sexist doubts about women’s fitness for flight permeated Congress, too. As a result of his gender prejudice, Ramspeck was pleased to save the Civilian Pilot Training Program and the jobs of the CAA pilots.<sup>138</sup> Later, he would be appointed executive vice president of the Air Transport Association (ATA, formerly known as the Air Force Ferrying Transport, which had been overseen by Nancy Harkness Love). This program was scheduled to be downsized until his committee recommended its renewal.<sup>139</sup> Ramspeck was later re-appointed Chairman of the House Committee on Civil Service, then chairman of the United

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<sup>135</sup> Molly Merryman, *The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: University of New York, 1998), 82.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>138</sup> Robert C. Word, *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress: 1774-Present, Ramspeck (1890-1972)*, accessed January 4, 2013, (<http://bioguide.congress.gov./scripts/bioisplay.pl?index=R000032>).

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

States Service Commission, and finally, after retirement, a vice-president of Eastern Airlines.<sup>140</sup> His services to the CAA were obviously appreciated.

Jacqueline Cochran was shocked by the sudden emergence of her opposition. She had at first believed that her advantages were incontestable. How could she lose? There was the support of General “Hap” Arnold, Commander of the AAF; there was the fact that Congress had never turned down an appeal by any branch of the military; and there was the documented proof of the WASPs’ superior performance record.<sup>141</sup>

Cochran did not mount a rigorous defense. Realizing that she was not a popular figure, she took a cautious approach, remaining silent during the hearings, and relying entirely on the prestige of General Arnold. She was often described as a “difficult woman” with many enemies, and was considered capricious, abrasive, and hostile. Her strategy was not to appear pushy, aggressive, or unfeminine.<sup>142</sup> It was reported that during the hearings regarding militarization, Cochran handed down an edict forbidding the WASPs to write to their Congressmen or communicate with the press.<sup>143</sup> Ultimately, the failure of the WASPs to tell the press their side of the story worked to their disadvantage.

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<sup>140</sup> Robert C. Rampseck, accessed January 4, 2013, [bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=R000032](http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=R000032)

<sup>141</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 81-82.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>143</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Magnificent Women In Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Rawson, Wade Publisher, Inc., 1979), 300.

Cochran had apparently underestimated the power of the forces allied against her.<sup>144</sup>

In May 1944, General Arnold had his third heart attack, and was recuperating in Coral Gables, Florida when H.R.4219 was formally presented to Congress.<sup>145</sup> Henry Stimson was also absent. On June 20, 1944, John Costello was there to argue in favor of militarization.<sup>146</sup> However, he was not a powerful orator, and instead of crafting an argument in the WASPs' favor, he merely stressed that Congress should grant any request made by General Arnold by virtue of his military proficiency.<sup>147</sup> To make matters worse, the Congressional debate regarding the WASP bill was officiated by Robert Ramspeck.<sup>148</sup> But the Ramspeck Report had done its damage. It had effectively presented the idea that millions of tax dollars were being wasted on training inexperienced women, while experienced CAA pilots were being thrown out onto the street.<sup>149</sup> The report also charged that the WASP program was illegal, as it had been created without Congressional approval.<sup>150</sup> Anti-WASP congressmen repeated and stressed the grievances of the CAA pilots.<sup>151</sup> Representative James Morrison (a member of the Civil Service Committee) read an anti-WASP letter aloud on the

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<sup>144</sup>Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 29.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>151</sup>Amber Dzelzkalns, *From Barnstormers to Military Pilots: The Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (Madison, Wisconsin: McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin, 2009), 55.

House floor. It stated, “Probably it is the sentimental softness of the American men in regard to their women. 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 generals.”<sup>152</sup> In addition to this, a group of CAA pilots made combative outbursts, shouting rage and reproach, from the House gallery.<sup>153</sup> As a Rules Committee member presented the provisions of the WASP bill, he was interrupted so often by civilian pilots and their supporters, that it took forty-five minutes to bring the bill to a vote.<sup>154</sup> After several divided votes, the bill went down to defeat with 188 voting against, 169 voting for, and 73 abstaining.<sup>155</sup> By a margin of nineteen votes, the WASPs were defeated.<sup>156</sup>

General Arnold had previously looked for other ways to commission the WASPs without the controversy he had feared he would face if Congress became involved.<sup>157</sup> Anticipating the colossal battle that materialized, and just in case Congress failed to be militarize the WASPs, in January 1944 he asked Deputy Chief of Staff, General William E. Hall, to research the possibility of the WASPs’ being commissioned in the Air Transport Command, the same way as the civilian

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>154</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Magnificent Women In Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Rawson, Wade Publishers, Inc., 1979), 307-308.

<sup>155</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 101.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 41.

pilots.<sup>158</sup> The Comptroller General of the Army Air Force gave him an eleven-page response, essentially saying that temporary appointments applied only to qualified *male* personnel.<sup>159</sup>

Even after HR 4219's defeat, the media continued to defame the WASPs as there was always a chance the Senate might procure the program's militarization.<sup>160</sup> But other factors mandated its demise. The movie *Ladies Courageous*, starring Loretta Young and Geraldine Fitzpatrick, further undermined the WASPs. The movie portrayed the women in the WASPs as severely emotional and dangerously unstable. The film gave the misleading impression that women pilots were incompetent and ill-suited to fly planes. In 1942, Colonel Mason Wright, chief of the motion picture branch of the Department Bureau of Public Relations approached producer Walter Wanger to make this film. Three months later, the military withdrew from the project. The only way Wanger, who was already \$900,000 into production, would be able to complete the film, was to make thirteen changes in the script to meet Colonel Wright's specifications. The film was released February 1, 1944, right after the CAA pilots were terminated and the WASP militarization bill was put before

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<sup>158</sup> Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Rawson, Wade Publishers, Inc., 1979), 297.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 297-298.

<sup>160</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 108-109.

Congress. Opponents of the Costello Bill encouraged undecided voters to see *Ladies Courageous*.<sup>161</sup>

When the WAC's sought militarization, the Army Press Bureau openly supported them.<sup>162</sup> General George Marshall, the army Chief of Staff, spoke to the Press on their behalf.<sup>163</sup> Why did the Army withhold its public support from the WASPs? Why did General George Marshall, the second most powerful man in the nation after President Roosevelt and the one man in the military who held more authority than General Eisenhower, withhold his public support from the WASPs?<sup>164</sup> The Army Press Bureau had no power over the CAA pilots, but the Army *did* have control over their pilots. Why were not the AAF pilots given an edict to stop their protests? Why were they not given an edict to defend the WASPs? Surely, the Army Press Bureau realized the WASPs desperately needed their support. And, why would the military sponsor the production of *Ladies Courageous*, a fraudulent film replete with embarrassing caricatures and rambling illusory representations of the WASPs, then release it at the same time the WASPs were trying to be militarized? After the WASPs lost their bid for militarization in the House, why did Arnold withdraw his support, ignoring the opportunity to sponsor their militarization in the Senate? Why did he order the WASPs' early disbandment?

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<sup>161</sup> Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Projection of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 157.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.



To answer these questions, we must look at the behind-the-scene machinations of the AAF regarding the truth behind WASP disbandment. When HR 4219 was presented to Congress, it was reported that Cochran had instructed the WASPs to refrain from speaking to the media or publicly discussing the bill before Congress. Cochran was criticized for what many thought might have made the difference if only the WASPs had been allowed to speak in their defense or made the public aware of their fine performance and service. The truth is Cochran gave no such instructions. The edict was handed down from the War Department's Bureau of Public Relations.<sup>165</sup> Among the many theories regarding WASP militarization, is one that blames an infamous ultimatum that Cochran issued to General Arnold. On August 1, 1944, (after the WASP militarization defeat) Cochran issued an eleven-page status report providing a history of the program; the costs of training and maintenance; the range of missions performed by the WASPs; and the achievement of all the program's objectives. She sent the report, thinking that it would go straight to General Arnold. What she did not know, was that the Press Branch of the War Department attached a two-page news release whose headline highlighted, not only report's overall content, but a single suggestion offered by Cochran: "serious consideration should be given to inactivation of the WASP program if

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<sup>165</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press), 66.

militarization is not soon authorized.”<sup>166</sup> This ultimatum did *not* come from Cochran’s hand, but from a plan devised by the AAF.<sup>167</sup>

The AAF had an agenda that would supersede any hopes the WASPs might have had for militarization. Arnold had plans for the Army Air Force to become its own separate military branch. Major Richard Elliot, special assistant to the director of the Army Air Force suggested “any campaign to obtain militarization [for the WASPs] could result harmfully for AAF public and legislative relations.”<sup>168</sup> It seems the AAF was preparing for a larger legislative campaign to obtain separate standing from the Army following the war, and did not think it was a good time to make enemies.<sup>169</sup> To sever all ties with the WASPs seemed like the wise move.

On October 1, 1944, Arnold issued a memorandum to Cochran, essentially informing her that the WASPs should be deactivated no later than December 20, 1944, in spite of the fact the imminent future would yield the Battle of the Bulge, which cost more American lives than all previous battles put together, and war would persist for eight more months before V-J Day.

According to Arnold’s memorandum:

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 113.

The reduction in the flying training program and the changing war situation's bearing on availability and deployment of pilots make it evident that the WASP will soon become pilot material in excess of needs. They are serving, however, to release male pilots for their work and not to replace them.<sup>170</sup>

Ostensibly, women simply were not needed anymore because the war was winding down and there was a surplus of pilots. But this assertion was not true. A fourteen- page summary dated December 26, 1944, describes the reality.

Aerial activities of the AAF against Germany reached an all-time peak on and immediately following D-Day [June 6, 1944]. This tempo, modified only by the resources and manpower on hand, *will continue unabated until Germany unconditionally surrenders...* As long as total war lasts the job of training flying personnel and skilled technicians will continue to be of maximum importance.<sup>171</sup>

Clearly, Arnold was considerably less candid when he wrote to Cochran to explain the WASPs' disbandment. It was a disgraceful violation of military protocol.

Having rid itself of all of the controversy associated with the WASPs, the vexed CAA pilots, and the negative press, the AAF could focus on what had

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<sup>170</sup> General Henry "Hap" Arnold, "Memorandum from H. H. Arnold, General, U.S. Army, Commanding General, Army Air Forces, to Jackie Cochran," *Library of Congress papers of General Henry "Hap" Arnold, October 1, 1944*, (Library of Congress Printing, 1960).

<sup>171</sup> General Henry "Hap" Arnold, Summary, "The AAF When Hostilities Commenced," *Library of Congress papers of General Henry "Hap" Arnold, December 26, 1944*, (Library of Congress Printing, 1960).

become its predominant objective: becoming a separate military branch. Arnold had already acquired George Marshall's and Eisenhower's full support.<sup>172</sup> But after the war ended, the most seasoned and best-qualified officers and enlisted men exited the Army Air Force, leaving Arnold desperate for men and equipment.<sup>173</sup> How could he acquire Congressional approval for a separate Air Force if he did not have well-qualified personnel and only a few soon-to-be-obsolete aircraft?<sup>174</sup> In 1945 General Arnold and General Carl A. Spaatz, the future Commander of the United States Air Force, spoke to Congress, explaining that now, more than ever, a separate Air Force was imperative.<sup>175</sup> Arnold warned that "any part of the United States could be attacked from the air" and that "the nation's defense would rest on the Air Force."<sup>176</sup> Arnold went on to stress:

The basic defense against such a plan of attack must lie in the ability to mount rapid, powerful offensive action against the source. Responsibility for this defense will rest on the Air Force...air power needed an institutional voice to insure that a qualified person made key decisions. These conditions would insure that status necessary to air power to maintain national security and world peace.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Walton S. Moody, *Building a Strategic Air Force* (Library of Congress: Cataloging-in-Publication Data, 1995), 27, 50.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

Spaatz emphasized the versatility of air power and the need for unity of command.<sup>178</sup> American isolationism had paved the way for a world war, they contended, and the Munich Agreement had rendered America's European allies ill prepared when war had arrived.<sup>179</sup> Also, the Soviet Union, a former ally, was emerging as a fractious, volatile and possibly eminent foe.<sup>180</sup> General Spaatz emphasized that America could not wait for an outbreak of war before undertaking the time-consuming business of building an air force.<sup>181</sup> They asserted that it was going to be necessary to be firm with aggressors, and the only way to accomplish this was to always be prepared.<sup>182</sup> Anything less would constitute a gamble with American security.<sup>183</sup> And, to make sure that America would remain secure and ready, America needed an Air Force with strong, well-trained personnel, armed with the most advanced equipment.<sup>184</sup>

To put it simply, the war may have been winding down, but the Army Air Force was winding up. As early as September 1945, Operation Crossroads began testing the use of the atomic bomb.<sup>185</sup> Also, in 1945 air intelligence had been collecting data about the Soviet Union.<sup>186</sup> The Army Air Force created sixteen new air bases, two of which were built in England and Egypt. It is true that most

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 140.

of the commands were shut down because the war was over. But that did not mean they went away. It meant that they simply reappeared under new names. The CAA was terminated; but it reappeared as the Civil Air Transport.<sup>187</sup> As for the Civil Service Pilots, in 1946 they flew relief supplies, cargo, and passengers to China and the Far East.<sup>188</sup> Later, they flew for the Central Intelligence Agency.<sup>189</sup> Another example is the Army Air Forces Training Command (AAFTC), deactivated July 1, 1946; but it too, reappeared as The Air Training Command (ATC), and the Air Corp Ferrying Command (ACFC) became the Air Transport Command (ATC). When asked by the press about the status of the AAF, military spokesman could truthfully say most commands and training facilities were deactivated. It was the same with their air force bases (AFB). For example, Roswell AAF became Walker AFB, Smoky Hill AAF became Schilling AFB, Clovis AAF became Cannon AFB, and Fort Worth AAF became Carswell AFB. Had the WASPs been militarized, it would *not* have been at the expense of men's jobs, even those of the CAA pilots.

All things considered, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the WASP "Experiment" was dismantled not because the WASPs were unneeded but because they had succeeded beyond anyone's expectations. Like Icarus, they had flown too close to the sun. The military made a concerted effort to secure WASP

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<sup>187</sup> SFO Museum, "Civil Air Transport," accessed July 20, 2014, [www.flysfo.com/civil/-air-transport-asia%E2%80%99s](http://www.flysfo.com/civil/-air-transport-asia%E2%80%99s).

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

disbandment to the point of sabotage. First, the WASPs had received orders from Army Headquarters prohibiting communication with the media, in any way. After the AAF had agreed to militarize the WASPs, why didn't its press bureau aggrandize their highly important missions and impressive record to the nation, especially when they realized most people inherently believe that women were not able to fly military aircraft? Then the release of *Ladies Courageous*, a film that not only demonstrated the AAF's obvious contempt for the WASPs but its lack of commitment to achieve their militarization. Next, Arnold's abrupt detachment from the WASPs, ordering its early disbandment, and finally, the counterfeit edict from Cochran, issuing an ultimatum that she never made. All of these "unfortunate events" have the same author...the United States government. If the same propaganda machine that the United States used to insure the success of World War II had been appropriated to militarize the WASPs, there would be more than five percent female airline pilots, and more than five percent female military pilots, today, seventy years later.<sup>190</sup>

Their superior performance was documented, but was kept secret from the public. Top military personnel, such as Arnold, Tibbets, Tunner, and George, were aware of the women's extraordinary work, often flagrantly expounded the WASP's talent before their male pilots. For example, Colonel Tibbets trained two

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<sup>190</sup> Stacy Bannerman, "High Risk of Military Domestic Violence on the Home Front." The San Francisco Chronicle, April 7, 2014.

WASPs to fly the B-29 to demonstrate the aircraft's safety and reliability.<sup>191</sup>

These flights were quickly stopped a few days later, when Major General Barney Giles told Tibbets that the women were "putting the big football players to shame."<sup>192</sup> The WASPs had been promised that they would be militarized.<sup>193</sup> "They promised us," Florence "Shutsy" Reynolds, a WASP pilot, stated, "There was no doubt in my mind that we would be militarized." "They promised us." Bernice Faulk, also explained, "We were positive we would be militarized. I was preparing for officer school."<sup>194</sup> Instead, she and her sister WASPs were sent home. Their records were sealed and classified, not to be reopened for thirty years. Finally, in 1977, Congress admitted the WASPs into the Air Force.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Dora Dougherty Strother, accessed April 4, 2015, [www.cottyphile.com/dora/](http://www.cottyphile.com/dora/).

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Florence "Shutsy" Reynolds: 44-W5, telephone interview by Jessica Wilson, October 31, 2013 at 7:00pm.

<sup>194</sup> Bernice Faulk: 44-W7, telephone interview by Jessica Wilson, October 31, 2013 at 3:00pm.

<sup>195</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 156.



## Chapter Three

### “This is Vegas, Baby.”

Lt. Gary Mancich

The WASPs’ story exemplifies larger patterns in the history of America’s working women during World War II. The war was a major turning point and brought forth opportunities that had never before been possible, not only for the WASPs, but for all female workers.<sup>196</sup> Because of World War II, it became necessary for the government to organize the most prodigious effort this society has ever made toward ending prejudice against women in male occupations.<sup>197</sup> In order to achieve this monumental task, the United States launched the greatest propaganda campaign in history, increasing women’s ranks in the work force from eleven million to almost twenty million.<sup>198</sup> For the first time in the nation’s history, the government issued a nondiscrimination directive.<sup>199</sup> Women were urged to replace men in traditionally male occupations.<sup>200</sup> Factories provided day care centers for working mothers and established in-

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<sup>196</sup> Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1987), 1.

<sup>197</sup> Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda during World War II* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 211.

<sup>198</sup> Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out of Work: A History of Wage-Earning in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 276.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>200</sup> Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 1.

house banking facilities and grocery stores for their convenience.<sup>201</sup> By mid-1942, the ever-increasing need for more war workers induced the federal government to lower the age of employment from eighteen to sixteen.<sup>202</sup> But what many do not know is that the propaganda machine during World War II was a carefully orchestrated plan, designed to nationally mobilize women into an efficient production army to work on command and then to withdraw them from that work once the war was over. The War Manpower Commission (WMC) suggested that propaganda planners should target housewives without children to join the labor force because, “there is little doubt that women will be required to leave their jobs at the end of the war to permit the return of men to their jobs as they are released from the armed forces.”<sup>203</sup> So, from the outset, it was not the government’s intention for women to maintain their wartime employment after the war.

In 1942, the U. S. created the Office of War Information (OWI). It was a sprawling organization that included the War Advertising Council and the Writer’s War Board and it was designed to influence newspapers, magazines, films, and radio. All would consolidate the wartime voice of America.<sup>204</sup> These government agencies generated a powerful and imposing home-front

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<sup>201</sup> Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out of Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 275.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>203</sup> Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 26-27.

<sup>204</sup> Wikipedia, “American Propaganda during World War II,” accessed April 4, 2015, [www.wikipedia.org/.../](http://www.wikipedia.org/.../).

propaganda campaign meant to glorify working, and persuade women that it was their patriotic duty to self-sacrifice by joining the nation's workforce to be equal partners in pursuing American victory.<sup>205</sup> This social engineering encouraged women to replace men in jobs in government munitions plants, and airplane factories, and to learn welding, riveting, and electrical wiring.<sup>206</sup> Like the WASPs, not only could war workers execute the same work as men, but their work performance was rated higher than that of their male counterparts.<sup>207</sup> As a result, hopes were high that their employment would continue after the war was over.<sup>208</sup> Women who worked in industry joined unions in large numbers anticipating that their union membership would yield job security after the war.<sup>209</sup> However, their large numbers seldom gave them the powerful positions needed to yield any lasting influence in their unions.<sup>210</sup>

The OWI was given the power to produce and distribute to all publishers a "Magazine War Guide" which gave publishers of magazines, "how to instructions," full of ideas, information, and slogans for their publications.<sup>211</sup> In 1942, *Life* magazine, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Ladies Home Journal* kept

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<sup>205</sup> Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 6.

<sup>206</sup> Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 58.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>208</sup> Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out of Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 287.

<sup>209</sup> Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 128.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>211</sup> Journeys and Crossings, Library of Congress, "Rosie the Riveter: Real Women Workers in World War II," accessed April 4, 2015, [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov).>Reasearchers.

the nation up to date with photos and formulaic fiction describing that the girls working in the factories were the ones who succeeded in attracting men, not the women who lived for pleasure. There were stories about how one could save gas and spark a romance by carpooling with a man, features about women bravely coping with the sacrifices of the war, articles about women with bad reputations being redeemed by work, anecdotes about working women who had happy lives and tales about homeowners taking in boarders.<sup>212</sup> *Life* did its part to publish feature stories fully supporting women in the WACs, WAVES, Women's Coast Guards (SPARS), Women's Marines, Army Nurse Corp (ANC), Navy Nurse Corp (NNC), and WASPs.<sup>213</sup> So long as men were fighting for their country overseas, the publications encouraged women to enter "male" occupations. It was the OWI that created what became one of the most recognizable icons in the history of media, "Rosie the Riveter," designed to inspire millions of single and married women to support the American cause.<sup>214</sup> But those opportunities came with limits, as women workers would find out when the war drew to an end.

The War Production Board had erroneously predicted that most women would voluntarily leave their wartime jobs and return home, to "natural surroundings" after the war was over.<sup>215</sup> When poll after poll revealed that close

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<sup>212</sup> Wikipedia, "American Propaganda during World War II," accessed April 4, 2015, [www.wikipedia.org/.../](http://www.wikipedia.org/.../).

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II* (Boston: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 21.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 1.

to eighty percent of working women wanted to keep their jobs at war's end, rather than simply adjust to the status quo ante, the OWI quickly reversed the previous propaganda strategy.<sup>216</sup> The OWI encouraged newspapers and magazine publishers to focus on women who wanted to return to "normal living," and "normal" meant prewar.<sup>217</sup> The audacity of this plan, both demeaning and absurd, would not be so terrifying were it not for its compelling success.

Women who wished to remain in a traditionally male job, were depicted as selfish and unpatriotic. The government's propaganda machine was capable of launching unprecedented influence on the nation's population. For example, post war Americans were exposed to galvanizing messages pressing the urgency to marry and have children, causing an unprecedented impact on the nation's birth rate.<sup>218</sup> Never before or since in the country's history has the birth rate risen higher than it did from 1944 to 1964.<sup>219</sup> Postwar America experienced what became known as the "baby boom."<sup>220</sup> During this time men and women married earlier than before, creating the largest generation in U.S. history.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>216</sup>Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 555-556.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 555-556.

<sup>218</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 1.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>221</sup> Wikipedia, "Post World War II Baby Boom," accessed April 6, 2015, [http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post\\_World\\_War\\_II\\_baby\\_boom](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_World_War_II_baby_boom)

When the war ended, the layoffs began and the old sexual division of labor resumed, despite the fact that most women wanted to retain their wartime jobs.<sup>222</sup> Employers who refused to give the returning soldier his job back were breaking the law and risked public condemnation.<sup>223</sup> Management admitted that wartime female substitution had been successful and that women had proved to be outstanding employees, but the experiment had been forced upon employers and now that the war was over, so was the experiment.<sup>224</sup> In fact, management went to great lengths to purge women from their auto plants in spite of the fact that Henry Ford's efficiency experts stated that, "job for job, women workers out-produced the men in most cases."<sup>225</sup> World War II had permanently changed American women.<sup>226</sup> Even though most factory employers told women they belonged at home, women still preferred to work, and reluctantly returned to "pink collar" jobs in clerical, sales, traditional women's factory jobs, and domestic work.<sup>227</sup> "Pink collar" jobs are low-level and low paying employment, such as the jobs of teachers, nurses, secretaries, stenographers, beauticians, sales clerks, domestic help, and telephone operators. These kinds of work are traditionally employ by women, and, most important,

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<sup>222</sup> Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out of Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 287.

<sup>223</sup> Francine A. Moccio, *Live Wire: Women and the Brotherhood in the Electrical Industry* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 56.

<sup>224</sup> Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 101.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 133, 120.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

are not considered a threat to men's employment.<sup>228</sup> When an opening became available for a woman to regain her job, management preferred to hire inexperienced men instead of women.<sup>229</sup> Women did protest to their unions, but most of the time, their protests were ignored altogether or resulted in little action.<sup>230</sup> Women lacked the time, energy, or political skills to promote an effective campaign.<sup>231</sup> At one protest meeting, women war workers discovered that their male opponents had stolen the cards the committee had prepared for publicity, and sabotaged their picket lines.<sup>232</sup> So the women war workers were engaged in the same struggle as the WASPs, and for the same reasons, were pushed aside. By 1947, the prewar employment picture had resumed, and again, women were confined to the female job ghetto, recommencing their usual work in clerical, service and domestic jobs, as well as careers in teaching and nursing.<sup>233</sup>

In the WACs, WAVES, SPARS, and so on women's duties remained "pink collar" occupations. The women who joined these military organizations during the war became secretaries, stenographers, file clerks, typists, switchboard operators, radio communications, storekeepers, bookkeepers, motor pool

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>233</sup> Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II*

drivers and were paid less than the men who had previously held these jobs.<sup>234</sup> The men in the Army, Navy, Coast Guards, and Marines, raised no protests against the WACs, WAVES, SPARS, ANC, NNC, and Women Marines because their female correlatives were given traditional female positions that men did not want.<sup>235</sup> So even though many women were serving the nation in new, decidedly modern ways, much of the work they were doing was still understood to be safely feminine.<sup>236</sup>

Only the WASPs did “men’s” work, and only they were denied militarization.<sup>237</sup> The WASPs were never going to attain militarization to fly for the United States government under any circumstances. If our nation ever had any intention for the women war workers or the WASPs to work side by side with men in nontraditional jobs, the policy would have been allowed to continue after World War II. In 1942, when the American government initiated and supported women’s participation in nontraditional employment, it worked. When the government withdrew its support, it disappeared. Equal access to airline piloting was never going to happen for the WASPs in 1944, and, seventy years later, it still hasn’t happened.

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<sup>234</sup> Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 3-4.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4



Today, female pilots make up only five percent of the United States Air Force.<sup>238</sup> Today, most occupations are still sex-segregated.<sup>239</sup> In 1995, seventy-nine percent of all secretaries were women, ninety-six percent of all women are in service occupations, eighty-three percent are in apparel sales, eighty-four percent are in elementary teaching jobs, and ninety-three percent are in nursing.<sup>240</sup>

Is it possible for women to work side by side with men in a nontraditional work without resistance or harassment? During World War II, the WASPs met with anger and resentment. Many male pilots and male mechanics were cold and ignored their existence and even resorted to sabotage. Women war workers met with similar antagonism. In 2015, patriarchal hostility toward women on nontraditional job sites still very much exists. Nationally, women make up less than two percent of the construction trades.<sup>241</sup> Women who have entered the construction trades experience a similar ruthless and persistent culture of resistance, through harassment, discrimination, which jeopardizes women's safety, just as the WASPs experienced seventy years ago.<sup>242</sup> When a woman shows up to work on a job site, there is no guarantee that she will be protected

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<sup>238</sup> Stacy Bannerman, "High Risk of Military Domestic Violence on the Home Front," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 7, 2014.

<sup>239</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Gender Differences in Occupational Employment," accessed April 24, 2015, [www.bls.gov/mir/1997/04/art2full.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/mir/1997/04/art2full.pdf).

<sup>240</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Gender Differences in Occupational Employment," accessed April 24, 2015, [www.bls.gov/mir/1997/04/art2full.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/mir/1997/04/art2full.pdf).

<sup>241</sup> Jane Latour, *Sisters in the Brotherhoods: Working Women Organizing for Equality in New York City* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), xiii.

<sup>242</sup> Francine A. Moccio, *Live Wire: Women in the Brotherhood in the Electrical Industry* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009). 152.

or that she will receive help when she needs it, making a woman feel very vulnerable.<sup>243</sup> There are two main reasons women have a higher rate of injury on a job site: the first is that men assigned to mechanical instruction have failed to show them the proper procedures for working with machines; and the second is that men withhold information regarding dangerous areas within the job site.<sup>244</sup> Just as the WASPs encountered in 1943, men in the trades are sabotaging women who invade their construction sites.

One of the perennial problems that women face on an overwhelmingly male job site is the presence of pornography, which is sanctioned by the site foreman and often extremely graphic in nature. This makes the workplace awkward and embarrassing for women and frequently prompts sexual harassment. Just as Lieutenant Fleishman's told the new WASP recruits in 1942, "If the army can dish it out, I can take it," so do the contractors tell their new female employees, "If women want to put themselves out on the line like that—then they have to take what's coming."<sup>245</sup>

Why do men in the trades resist working with women? The answer is, because *they are allowed to*. Despite the passage of laws such as The Equal Pay Act in 1963 and Title VII in the Civil Rights Act in 1964, discrimination continues.

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<sup>243</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>244</sup>Jean Schroedel, *Alone in a Crowd: Women in the Trades Tell Their Stories* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985), 52.

<sup>245</sup>Jean Schroedel, *Alone in a Crowd; Women in the Trades Tell Their Stories* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985), 125.

In addition to these laws, several agencies have been created to report employers who continue to discriminate against women, blacks, and other groups protected under Title VII. In 1969, the Building and Construction Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL-CIO) endorsed the concept of affirmative action in apprenticeship.<sup>246</sup> In 1971, the Department of Labor passed an edict that set goals requiring nontraditional trades to hire women.<sup>247</sup> Despite the campaigns by advocacy organizations and executive, legislative, and judicial intervention, women remain largely excluded from the construction industry today.<sup>248</sup> The liaison between political parties and legislators, contractors, industry leaders, and labor constituents allows women's segregation to remain incessant, frustrating progressive unionists and lawmakers in the struggle to enforce sex desegregation regulations.<sup>249</sup> In other words, management is allowed to let sex-discrimination continue.

To become threatened by a woman's accomplishments defies logic. And yet the pattern persists. After over seventy years anti-women prejudice is still embedded in military culture.<sup>250</sup> According to *Political and Military Sociology: An Annual Review*, edited by Neovi M. Karakatsanis and Jonathan Swarts, military

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<sup>246</sup> Francine A. Moccio, *Live Wire: Women and the Brotherhood in the Electrical Industry* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 104.

<sup>247</sup> Susan Eisenberg, *We'll Call You if we Need You* (London: ILR Press Cornell University Press, 1998), 21.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

institutions' idea is that being a warrior is the key to masculinity.<sup>251</sup> Physical strength, aggressiveness, and forcefulness are rewarded in the military. When women enter the military, it throws men into confusion about male identity.<sup>252</sup> It is disturbing that our nation's military encourages its own recruits to treat patriotic American women with intense hostility. For example, twenty-one percent of our nation's domestic violence is committed by combat veterans.<sup>253</sup> Eighty percent of veterans commit domestic violence, which is fourteen times higher than the general civilian population.<sup>254</sup> The frequency of domestic abuse nationwide declined by sixty-four percent from 1994 to 2010 but the frequency of domestic violence from people affiliated with the military more than tripled from 2006 to 2011.<sup>255</sup> The numbers of Fort Carson, Colorado, soldiers charged with domestic violence between 2006 and 2009 rose more than 250 percent.<sup>256</sup> Domestic abuse in the Army rose by 177 percent from 2003 to 2010 by 177 percent.<sup>257</sup>

Another shocking number has to do the infamous Tailhook incident in 1991, when twenty-five women were sexually assaulted by Navy pilots while

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<sup>251</sup> Neovi M. Karakatsanis and Jonathan Swarts, eds., *Political and Military Sociology: An Annual Review* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2011).

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Stacy Bannerman, "High Risk of Military Domestic Violence on the Home Front," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 7, 2014.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

attending the annual Tailhook Association Convention.<sup>258</sup> When the media asked how something like this could have happened, Lieutenant Gary Mancich answered, “Everyone needs to lighten up. Well, what do they (women) expect? This is Vegas, baby! They call this symposium, tail hook for a reason!”<sup>259</sup> After this incident, the military began an investigation, but apparently very little was accomplished.<sup>260</sup> Aspiring female pilots can learn to fly while in service to the Air Force, whereas training to become an airline pilot outside the military costs over \$100,000.<sup>261</sup> This confronts women with a tough choice given that “The Air Force Academy has the highest rate of sexual assault of any American service academy for four straight years.”<sup>262</sup> According to the *New York Times*, “The Air Force has investigated fifty-four reports of sexual assault or rape over the past ten years in the Air Force Academy.”<sup>263</sup> Unfortunately, those figures are challenged by Congressional officials who have stated that twice that number have recently been reported by cadets.<sup>264</sup> Cadets who have been victimized explain that after they report the assault they face indifference or retaliation by academy

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<sup>258</sup> Wikipedia, “Tailhook Scandal,” accessed April 4, 2015, [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/).

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> A. Pawlowski, *CNN*, March 8, 2011. “Why Aren’t their more Women Airline Pilots?” [www.cnn.com/2011/Travel/3/8/female.airline.pilots/](http://www.cnn.com/2011/Travel/3/8/female.airline.pilots/).

<sup>262</sup> Tom Roeder, “Air Force has most Sex Assault Reports among Service Academies,” *Gazette*, accessed April 28, 2015, <http://gazette.com/air-force-has-most-sex-assault-reports-among-service-academies/article/1512391>.

<sup>263</sup> Eric Schmitt with Michael Moss, “Air Force Academy Investigated 54 Sexual Assaults in 10 Years,” *The New York Times*, accessed April 28, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/07/us/air-force-academy-investigated-54-sexual-assaults...>

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

officials.<sup>265</sup> Senator Wayne Allard, a Republican from Colorado said that he believed that the situation is worse than the Tailhook Scandal.<sup>266</sup> Perhaps the accusations of assault are so numerous because male cadets have no fear of reprisals. In the past ten years only two cadets have been charged, with one acquitted and the other sentenced to seven months in jail.<sup>267</sup> However, the Air Force Academy has initiated what it considers a new campaign to remedy sexual assaults by putting up posters around the campus.<sup>268</sup>

It has been over seventy years since Congress refused to militarize the WASPs. Finally in 1977, the U.S. Air Force allowed women to fly its aircraft. Considering that time, women are now allowed to fly military aircraft. But the men who statistically dominate the military have been successful in creating an atmosphere of hostility and assault that has reached the level of endangerment, and women's presence and participation in the military is untenable. This situation will continue as long as our government and judicial system allow men to break the law. It is obvious that "Uncle Sam's" justice system allows the military to consistently commit crimes against women. If men in the military were being unceasingly threatened by combative individuals under its command, the situation would be remedied overnight. The U.S. government continues to practice, condone, and abet discrimination against women just as it did in 1944.

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

It would be a travesty if another generation of women pilots were forced to remain waiting in the wings.

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