

Nearly 5 years after learning to fly, Elaine's husband suggested she join the WASP. She earned her wings as a WASP in the class of 44-9. After completing her WASP training, Elaine was stationed at Nellis Air Force Base, near Las Vegas, NV. There she flew BT-13s and B-17s. BT-13s were used to allow pilots to practice instrument flying. Elaine would pilot the aircraft, freeing her male counterparts to practice their instrument flying.

It was a daunting task. The technology was different then. The men had to sit in the backseat, under a dark hood which obscured their view of everything but the instruments in front of them. They could only do it because they had a great pilot in the front ensuring their safety.

After the WASP were disbanded in December 1944, Elaine made her way back to Baltimore. She didn't stay long. Her mother was embarrassed, ashamed that Elaine would participate in what was seen at the time as an unlady-like endeavor. So Elaine scraped together what skimpy savings she had and bought a one-way ticket to California. With her husband still overseas and with less than \$30 in her pocket, she eventually found a job as an air traffic controller in Oakland.

Thirty years passed before Elaine Harmon was offered veterans' status. Thirty years before her service to the nation was recognized. But like the other WASP, Elaine Harmon believed in the cause she served. She knew the obstacles, but chose her own way. In the end, she paved the way for the armed services to lift the ban on women attending military flight training in the 1970s, and eventually led to women being fully integrated as pilots in the U.S. military. Today women can fly every type of aircraft and mission, from fighter jets in combat to the shuttle in space flight. Women like Elaine Harmon made this possible.

The WASP were trailblazers and true patriots. We owe them our "thank you"—not in words, but in deeds. For their courage, service and dedication to our nation, the WASP have earned the most distinguished honor Congress can give: the Congressional Gold Medal.

Now the bill to give WASP Congress' top award has been passed and signed into law. The process of designing, casting, and presenting these medals had begun. I look forward to the day, very soon, when I can present Elaine Harmon and all the other WASP this medal they have earned and so long deserved.●

TRIBUTE TO NANCY MAGRUDER

● Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, today I honor a group of women who have made a lasting contribution to American history. They are the Women Airforce Service Pilots, or WASP.

Who are the WASP?

They were the first women trained in American military aircraft. They were trailblazers and true patriots. They are

women like Nancy Magruder. They came from all walks of life. They were students, secretaries, nurses, daughters, wives. One was a nun. They shared the same goal: to contribute to the American war effort.

Between 1942 and 1944, the 1,102 WASP trained in Texas, then went on to fly noncombat military missions so that all their male counterparts could be deployed to combat. These women piloted every kind of military aircraft, and logged 60 million miles flying missions across the United States. Thirty-eight of them died in the line of duty.

These intrepid women served their country with courage and valor. But for too long, their country did not serve them. They were never awarded full military status and were ineligible for officer status. They faced strong cultural and gender bias and received unequal pay. Following the war, they were told to pay their own way home. It was not until 1977—more than 30 years later—that the WASP were granted veterans' status.

Thirteen of these brave women hail from Maryland. Four are still alive today: Nancy Magruder, Florence Marston, Elaine Harmon, and V. Scotty Gough. I am proud to honor them today.

Iola "Nancy" Clay Magruder earned her wings as part of class 44-7. After graduation, she was stationed at Enid Army Air Base in Oklahoma. Her mission was to train aviation cadets to become pilots and commissioned officers, an honor that would not be extended to the WASP during WWII. While at Enid Army Air Base, Nancy flew utility missions, or testing missions, to ensure the aircraft were safe for the cadets. She also flew ferrying missions of the BT-13s and BT-15s. In all, Nancy would fly five different aircraft variants: the BT-13; BT-15; PT-17; and the B-18 "Bolo," the most numerous long range bomber of WWII.

Like the other WASP, Nancy was unceremoniously disbanded in December 1944. The promise that she would be militarized and become part of the Army was not kept. Still, Nancy wanted to serve. She would join the U.S. Air Force Reserve and earned the rank of second lieutenant.

Nancy's story is a story of dedication to this country. She risked her life in service to our nation so that the rest of us may live in freedom. She did so without the promise of recognition or pay. And she paved the way for the armed services to lift the ban on women attending military flight training in the 1970s, and eventually led to women being fully integrated as pilots in the U.S. military. We owe her our "thank you"—not in words, but in deeds.

For too long, the WASP story of service and sacrifice has been left untold. I'm proud to have fought to right this wrong by sponsoring legislation to award Nancy Magruder and her fellow WASP the most distinguished honor Congress can give: the Congressional Gold Medal.

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TRIBUTE TO FLORENCE MARSTON

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Who are the WASP?

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Florence Niemiec Marston, born in Buffalo, NY, volunteered to enter WASP training at an early age. She paid her own way to get to the training site in Texas, and earned her wings as part of the class of 43-6. After graduation, her talents and bravery were needed in several duty locations: South Plains Army Air Base, Dodge City Army Air Base, and Pueblo Army Air Base.

At South Plains, Florence flew B-25s and C-60s, and trained to tow CG-4 gliders mostly at low altitude and at night. It was a risky and arduous mission. Later, Florence was selected to transfer to Dodge City Army Air Base and fly the B-26.

The B-26 was a difficult aircraft to fly. It was called the "widowmaker," for it was notorious for its number of early accidents. Only about 100 WASP would learn to fly this aircraft. Florence Marston was one of them.

While stationed at Dodge City, Florence Marston flew B-26s on tow-target