



AMERICAN WOMEN PILOTS

V.S.

A large and rapidly growing group of American women pilots are flying with the American Army Air Forces in non-combat duties. They are officially known as "WASPs" which means Women's Airforce Service Pilots. Their function is to release men pilots for more advanced or combat duties, and they are accomplishing this with cumulative effect.

The organized use of American women pilots in the war effort had its beginning in the spring of 1942, when I took 25 women to England to fly with the British Air Transport Auxiliary. Most of them are still there and doing good work. Others of the nearly 4,000 licensed American women pilots had found individual opportunity delivering or testing planes for aircraft factories, or instructing or working with the Civilian Air Patrol. In the fall of 1942, about 25 of the more experienced woman pilots who were not in England went to work for the Air Transport Command, ferrying planes under the leadership of Mrs. Robert (Nancy) Love. At the same time, I returned from England to organize and supervise, under the direction of the Army Air Forces Training Command, a broad, advanced training program for women pilots. These women pilots are given a six months' course paralleling that given to the air cadets, except for gunnery and other phases of combat training. They then receive their wings and are assigned to various using agencies within the Army Air Forces.

With several hundred graduated last mid-year and several hundred more constantly being moved through training, the time seemed to have arrived for centralized coordination of the program as a whole. The War Department appointed me Director of Women Pilots to work with the General Staff of the Army Air Forces.

The women pilots will be in uniform very shortly. Although to date, they have Civil Service status, they live in barracks at the training field or in officers quarters at the use bases and are subject to strict discipline.

To date, most of the women pilots have been used in ferry work, but other uses are rapidly opening up for them. The accident rate among the women pilots has been low. Not all licensed women pilots are in the WASPs yet, but most of them have applied for admission, and many more each month are receiving their licenses through their own efforts at civilian schools and are adding their names to the long list of applicants.

Many of these women pilots have hundreds of hours of experience in the air. No one goes to a using agency with less than 200 hours' air time, which includes two-motor experience, night flying, and instrument flying, supplemented by many hours of ground schooling.

I have heard much about the good work being done by the women of Australia in the war effort and am sorry I have never been in your country. I started there once by air, but never arrived. That was in 1934 in the MacRobertson air race from London to Melbourne.

JACQUELINE COCHRAN  
Director of Women Pilots

3 September 1943

For release to: Australian Women's Weekly - Sidney, Australia

