

Memorial Day Mission Accomplished: #HonoringtheWASP



May 29, 2018 – As the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) celebrated its 75th Anniversary Homecoming at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas, members of Women in Aviation International and others in the aviation community honored those pioneering World War II women who have passed by visiting and decorating their graves during Memorial Day weekend.

A contingent led by WAI Director of Communications Kelly Murphy decorated WASP graves in Arlington National Cemetery. A photo of each individual grave was then tweeted with the hashtag #HonoringTheWASP.

“Our volunteers, ranging from high school and college students to active and retired aviation professionals, really helped make Memorial Day 2018 a humbling experience and one we won’t soon forget,” said Murphy. “Thanks to the resources of the Texas Woman’s University, The Women in Military Service for America, and personnel of Arlington National Cemetery, we were able to logistically organize flowers, volunteers, and locate the individual graves. For everyone involved, we were touched WAI could assist in protecting the WASP legacy.”

Individual members and friends were able to access a database of WASP gravesites provided by Texas Woman’s University to find one near them. Nationwide, WASP graves were visited and their names remembered and honored. In addition, the memory of five WASP whose ashes were scattered at sea was preserved by casting a bouquet of five flowers from a pier in Ocean City, New Jersey. In total, nearly 100 WASP graves were honored and all efforts were shared on social media via #WomeninAviation with #HonoringTheWASP.

For those who decorated a WASP grave, it was often a family event and a lesson in history and respect. “We were told that decorating the grave was an emotional experience and the highlight of the individual’s Memorial Day Weekend,” added Murphy.

WAI President Dr. Peggy Chabrian honored WASP Betty Stagg Turner (44-W-9), buried at Montgomery, Ohio, who is author of an important historical resource on the WASP entitled *Out of the Blue and into History*, on Memorial Day. “The WASP are trailblazers,” said Dr. Chabrian. “These valiant women not only aided the war effort, but opened the doors for future women military pilots.”

About the WASP:

The Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) were inducted into WAI’s International Pioneer Hall of Fame in 1993. The WASP began in September 1942 as the Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS), part of the Ferrying Division, Air Transport Command, U.S. Army Air Forces. In August 1943, the WAFS and the women training in an Army all-women’s flying facility in Texas were combined and renamed the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). Under the guidance of Jacqueline Cochran and Nancy Harkness Love, a total of 1,102 WASP pilots flew in World War II. Nancy led the 303 WASP who served in the Ferrying Division. The WASP program was suspended in December 1944.

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Women in Aviation International is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to providing networking, mentoring and scholarship opportunities for women and men who are striving for challenging and fulfilling careers in the aviation and aerospace industries. For more information, contact WAI at 3647 State Route 503 South, West Alexandria, OH 45381, Phone (937) 839-4647; Fax (937) 839-4645 or through www.wai.org.

Contact:

Molly Martin

Women in Aviation International Outreach Director

850-508-8769 | mmartin@wai.org