

Welcome new members!



Winter 2024

## THE RAIDER CHRONICLES



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CARNAHAN**

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### ABOUT US

THE AFHF Newsletter is a quarterly e-mail newsletter by the Air Force Historical Foundation, a private non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the history and traditions of American air and space capabilities.

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# Chairman's Corner



## Exciting Plans for 2025 and Celebrating Women in Air and Space Power

Dear Members of the Air Force Historical Foundation,

Happy New Year! I hope each of you enjoyed a joyous holiday season filled with family, friends, and reflection. As we step into 2025, I am excited to share that this year is poised to be a banner one for the Air Force Historical Foundation.

We have ambitious plans on the horizon, including the launch of a significant funding campaign aimed at securing the resources needed to expand our programs and outreach efforts. This campaign will enable us to deepen our mission of preserving and promoting the history and heritage of air and space power.

In addition, we are preparing a significantly enhanced experience for our annual symposium and banquet. These

cornerstone events will feature dynamic speakers, interactive sessions, and networking opportunities designed to engage and inspire our members. Stay tuned for more details in the coming months!

This month also marks an exciting milestone for *The Raider Chronicles*, which is celebrating its one-year anniversary. This publication has quickly become a valued supplement to the *Journal of the Air Force Historical Foundation* and our website, providing fresh perspectives and stories that deepen our collective understanding of air and space heritage.

We are especially thrilled to release our first “themed” issue, spotlighting the history of women in air and space power. This theme resonates deeply as we continue to recognize and honor the trailblazers who have shaped our rich history.

This issue features contributions from remarkable women whose insights and expertise illuminate the diverse roles and achievements of women in this domain. I believe you’ll find the feature article by Marcy Atwood of Women Military Aviators—one of our affiliate organizations—particularly compelling.

I want to extend heartfelt thanks to this month’s other contributors: Bobi Oats, Peggy Carnahan, Margie Varuska, and Scott Willey. Your dedication and passion are evident in every word, and we are grateful for your efforts to bring these important stories to light.

As always, your input is invaluable. We encourage you to share your thoughts, suggestions, and feedback on this issue or any aspect of our work. Please feel free to reach out to us at [newslettereditor@afhistory.org](mailto:newslettereditor@afhistory.org)—we would appreciate hearing from you!

Thank you for your continued support of the Foundation and its mission. Here’s to a successful and meaningful 2025 as we honor and preserve the legacy of air and space power together.

The 2025 AFHF Annual Symposium and Banquet will be May 21-22 in the DC area. Registration is now open!

[Learn More](#)

# Quiz



*Courtesy USAF*

**What Secretary of the Air Force, without Air Staff coordination, announced he was opening pilot training to women, upending the Air Force's official position that they only trained "combat pilots" and eventually sending the first class of women to UPT?**

- a. Hans Mark
- b. John L. McLucas
- c. Thomas C. Reed

Answer on last page of the newsletter.

## Fun/First Photo of the Month

A section dedicated to photos of first flights of aircraft/spacecraft and fun air & space events



This photo was taken on June 21, 1913, as 18-year-old Georgia "Tiny" Broadwick became the first woman to make a parachute jump from an airplane. In 1914, Broadwick demonstrated free fall jumps to the Army, but military pilots of the day still believed they would black out if they tried a free fall bailout. Wearing parachutes did not become routine practice for military pilots until 1922.

**Submit quiz ideas or suggested photos to  
[newslettereditor@afhistory.org](mailto:newslettereditor@afhistory.org)**



# Modern Military Women Aviators: Celebrating 50 and 30 Years of Service

Marcelyn Atwood  
Women Military Aviators (WMA) Historical Committee

## Generation One: The Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Legacy

**M**any know about the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), a group of women who flew military aircraft in the WWII. Eighty-three years ago, in 1942 there were two programs sourcing women pilots into military aircraft to support the war effort—Women Auxiliary Ferry Squadron (WAFS) and Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD). By 1943, those two programs merged into one, the WASP. These women flew every military aircraft in the inventory supporting missions including testing, training, towing targets, and delivering aircraft where the Army needed them. In 1945, the WASP were disbanded and the women had to find their way home on their own.

Forgotten after WWII, the WASP rallied to gain recognition when the Department of Defense (DoD) started an early 1970's media campaign about opening more career fields to women, including aviation. The DoD public affairs office stated it would be the first time women would fly military aircraft. Former WASP members quickly corrected the record and reminded the public of their WWII service contributions flying military aircraft.

In simple terms, the WASP legacy can be stated as "they did their part for the war effort." However, today's women military aviators view the WASP legacy as so much more. During the 1940s, the WASP proved women could fly any aircraft in the inventory and could do so under adversity: battling airworthiness of aircraft, environmental conditions, or just dealing with acceptance in military aviation units.



*Gen 1 pilots with some members of the first USAF Undergraduate Pilot Training class of Gen 2 pilots*

First, the WASP proved that when statutes and regulations are not limiting, women readily volunteer to serve their country even if the entrance requirements are stringent. Secondly, once graduated from training, the WASP flew every aircraft in the U.S. Army Air Force inventory, proving women could fly all aircraft. Third, the WASP pulled targets for artillery practice, instructed men how to fly, ferried aircraft, test-flew planes, and operated top-secret aircraft. They proved women could do more than straight and level flight and could push the limits of flight if necessary. Post WWII, the WASP were encouraged to join the military in non-flying positions. Over 200 enlisted in the reserves, proving women could exist in an integrated military organization and accomplish the mission. Lastly, this first generation of women military aviators proved that military aviation is not a gender specific skill; the aircraft does not care what gender is at the controls.

## Fifty-Two Years of Generation Two: 1973-1993 Military Women Aviators Legacy

Fifty-two years ago, in 1973, the Navy and Army sent women to pilot training. Three years later, the Air Force and U.S. Coast Guard sent their first cohort to pilot training. For two decades, Service policies based on law restricted the types of aircraft and missions these women aviators could fly. Their abilities, persistence, and proven aviation skills led to pushing ever wider boundaries. In these decades, women were flying test planes, becoming astronauts, serving on training carriers as ship crew, training pilots to fly, flying airborne surveillance and reconnaissance, providing logistical airlift into unstable areas of the world, and providing tanker support for the Strategic Integrated Operational Plan (the nuclear war plan). Those missions, no matter how close to the conflict or designed as a one-way mission, were not classified as “combat” by various definitions and exceptions to policy.

It wasn't until the 1991 Persian Gulf War, with an air campaign consisting of more than 118,000 military flights in 44 days, that the edge between the front combat lines and the back combat support areas blurred in an undeniable way. Women flying support missions were in the fight if they were close enough to be shot out of the sky. From the DoD perspective, women in support missions were technically outside the combat zone yet DoD conveniently ignored the range of the enemy's weapons.



*A three-generation honor guard of women military aviators at the retirement ceremony for Gen 2 pilot Army LTC Diana Davis*



*Then-Captain Kristin “Beo” Wolfe, a Gen 3 pilot and commander of the USAF -35 Demonstration Team, 2020-2023*

These women aviators carried on and after nearly 20 years of flying from 1973 through 1993, they not only mastered non-combat military aviation but left their own legacy: “Respect the skill at the controls, rather than ‘seeing’ a woman or a man.”

## Thirty-Two Years of Generation Three: Modern Military Women Aviators in Combat

In December 1991, President George H.W. Bush signed the repeal of the combat exclusion law. In April 1993, after an exhaustive study on women in combat, DoD changed the policy allowing women aviators to fly combat missions. The Services immediately selected women aviators to attend fighter and bomber training. That same spring, the Marine Corps sent their first women to pilot training. Today's combat trained women aviators continue to prove the aircraft doesn't know the gender at the controls, only the skills, persistence, and daring to be the best.

*Col. Marcelyn Atwood, USAF (Ret), served nearly 25 years as a navigator, staff officer, and commander. After retiring from the Air Force in 2005, she joined two other women aviators managing the Women Military Aviator's oral history program and archives located at Texas Woman's University in Denton TX. She is a charter member of the Women Military Aviators.*

# Book Review

Scott A. Willey



**The Fight of Their Lives: A 21st Century Primer on World War II.**

By Andy Kutler. TX: Black Rose Printing, 2024. Maps.

Bibliography. Index. Pp. 373. \$32.95. ISBN: 978-1-68513-479-2

There are some wonderful scholarly works available that cover mankind's greatest conflict: Winston Churchill (all six volumes), Liddell Hart, Martin Gilbert, John Keegan, and Rick Atkinson (three volumes) are among the very best of these. Thousands of authors have provided books on specific battles, campaigns, units, and individuals that provide vastly more details about the war. What is in short supply are books that provide—at the general readership level—an overall perspective of the war in easy-to-understand language. Andy Kutler has provided such a book.

Kutler is neither an historian nor a military specialist. He is a strategic communications professional with decades of experience in both industry and government. He must have been very good at his job of communicating, because his book brings the entirety of the war—the big picture—to the reader in wonderfully crafted prose.

The book breaks the story of World War II into three distinct sections: the European Theater, the War at Home, and the Pacific Theater. Three things really stood out as I read the book. The first is that Kutler provides in both of the combat sections—Europe and the Pacific—very adequate histories of the events that led

up to eventual war. The actual combat events oftentimes don't make much sense without an understanding of what led to those events. The second standout is the use of vignettes at the end of each chapter that briefly discuss various people, events, or things associated with that chapter (all of which, by the way, are fairly short). The people he covers are not only the Pattons and Nimitzs, but also the Sgt Basilonos and Lt Boucks. The third item that made this book great is the entire middle section—the war at home. This is just as important—and, perhaps, even more meaningful in today's context—as the two combat sections. Here, Kutler covers the economy of the 1920s and 30s, America's industrial capacity, the roles of women and Blacks, sexism and prejudice, the injustice of the Japanese-American solution, and the Manhattan Project. World War II was important not only for the territory gained and lost, but also for the political, economic, and social changes it brought about.

One question that AFHF members might have is how a general book such as this relates to aerospace history. I feel that, every so often, it is good to understand the broader picture and air and space power roles within that larger context. This book certainly covers air power's place in World War II history along with sea, ground, and economic power.

Another question is to whom this book is applicable. My answer is nearly everyone. In 45 years of giving tours at the National Air and Space Museum, I was always appalled at the lack of even fundamental understanding of this seminal period in U.S. history. It wasn't just the kids who had no idea what this war was about or who fought it and where it was fought, but their parents as well. Kutler has provided what he promised: a primer that outlines the war in its entirety. Most Americans should read and digest this excellent book.

*Col. Scott A. Willey, USAF (Ret.), is the Book Review Editor for the Journal of the AFHF and a former National Air and Space Museum docent.*

[Click here to see books by AFHF members](#)



# Member Spotlight

SMSgt. Roberta “Bobi” Pike Oates, USAF (Ret.)



**Military background:** Active duty USAF 1976-1999 in aircraft maintenance.

**Why I joined AFHF:** I enjoyed the daily “day in history” emails, and then at one of the AFA’s Air, Space & Cyber conference I met some of the folks.

**Favorite military history book:** I have so many favorite military history books, but the one AFHF did on 75 Great Airman, I really enjoyed that one, which led me to reading more books about those airmen. I also enjoyed the books for the AFHF Book Club, and got all of those as well.

**Memories:** When I joined in 1976 I wanted to be a cop, but they said they had something more challenging: aircraft maintenance. Being a farm girl, picking up a 20 lb tool box was no problem.

The Air Force had opened up more fields to women; unfortunately they set up a lot of women to fail in aircraft maintenance. I didn’t think I would make it thru the first 4 years, but then the next thing I knew it was 23 years. My first aircraft was the F-4C in Torrejon Spain, heavy maintenance and crash recovery. Next stop Williams AFB, AZ as a T-38 crew chief, maintenance control and supervision. Then to Hondo, TX as a quality assurance evaluator on T-41s. Next stop was Osan, Korea, Quality Assurance, Fabrication Flight and Transient Alert. It was in Korea in 1993 as a MSgt that I had my first female mentor, a SMSgt. From there F-4G at Nellis because I met my husband-to-be at Osan and he was headed to Nellis. When the F-4s retired, I was the fourth person assigned to the new 11th Reconnaissance Sq, Indian Springs, NV, home of the Predator, in Oct 1995. I was part of the AF team in Tazar, Hungary in 1996 that took control of the UAV Predator program from the Army. To this day I’m still amazed to see what the UAV program has grown to and how big Creech AFB has become.

## When I Served

Lt. Col. Peggy Carnahan, USAF (Ret.)



**Unit:** 559th Flying Training Squadron, Randolph AFB TX

**Unit dates:** Activated on Jan 15, 1941 as 81 Bombardment Squadron; after multiple redesignations/inactivations became 559 Fighter-Escort Squadron on Oct 27, 1951, then other redesignations/inactivations until redesignated 559 Flying Training Squadron on Mar 22, 1972 and activated on May 1, 1972.

**Dates I served in unit:** Feb 1988 - Jul 1991 & May 1999 - May 2000 (attached IP)  
Feb 1996 - May 1999 (ops officer and commander)

**My unit memories:** My first tour with the 559 FTS was as an attached instructor pilot while I was assigned to the 3305th School Squadron where I was the courseware developer for T-37 Pilot Instructor Training. I returned as the Operations Officer and then Commander, the first woman to do so. We faced a lot of challenges: ramping up pilot production after the post-Desert Storm drawdown and the closures of Williams and Reese AFBs, planning the command transition to the T-6A Texan II, and safeguarding the best safety record in the USAF—more than 35 years without a Class A incident. The squadron members took these challenges head on and excelled. I was never alone in my command—a lifetime of connections and friendships, some as far back as grade school, gave me a close support network, including other “first” women commanding flying squadrons at the time. As a bonus, thanks to the “gray beard” IP program, I could go to any of my flight rooms and find a wealth of pilot training and leadership expertise. Command was the highlight of my professional career.

**Current unit status:** Actively training the finest T-6A Texan II instructors in the world.



# Ask a Researcher

Margie Varuska

**Question:** What are special collections, and what role do they play in historical archives and research? Margie Varuska answers this question for us using the example of the current special collections effort by one of AFHF's affiliate organizations, Women Military Aviators.

Women Military Aviators (WMA) is a non-profit organization founded in 1978 by members of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) of World War II and some young women in the next generation of women military aviators. WMA serves to preserve the past, promote the present, and protect the future of women military aviators (this includes pilots, navigators, and others in military aviation roles).

WMA's Historical Committee is tasked and dedicated to Preserving the Past by capturing individual as well as organizational information in a single, accessible and safe location. Following in the footsteps of the WASP, WMA formally established their official archive at Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas in 2013.

WMA members are encouraged to donate items such as military records, biographical information, photographs, artifacts and memorabilia to start their personal collections. The Historical Committee works closely with TWU Special Collections to identify, inventory and categorize these donations. Collection processing and digitization initiatives are continually reviewed by the staff to incorporate changes in technology and software.

Thanks to these documentation and preservation efforts, the WMA archive continues to grow substantially. The collections offer unparalleled research opportunities to scholars, educators, students and historians as they delve into the history of women military aviators.

By documenting the lives and careers of WMA members, the true and complete story of women in military aviation may be told, and their remarkable legacy will continue.

*Lt. Col. Marjorie Varuska, USAF (Ret.), served 20 years as a pilot, USAF Academy instructor and AF Attache. After retiring from the Air Force in 2000, she flew 20 years for Southwest Airlines. She is a charter member of Women Military Aviators.*

## Submissions

This is your newsletter; we need content from you!

Please send submissions to [newslettereditor@afhistory.org](mailto:newslettereditor@afhistory.org)

**Feature Articles:** 800 - 1,000 words. Submit full articles or ideas to editor.

**Book Reviews:** Less than 500 words. In addition to traditional airpower and aviation history books, we welcome young adult and children's books with aviation themes.

**Ask a Researcher:** Submit questions or let us know if you would like to answer questions.

**Member Spotlight:** Answer the four questions and submit. All AFHF members are eligible.

**When I Served:** Answer the five questions and submit. We are interested in anyone who has served or is serving in any USAF or USSF unit at any time. Family members are also encouraged to submit their memories.

**Quiz Answer: b. John L. McLucas**