BLANCHE OSBORN

WASP 1943 - 1944

(WOMENS AIRFORCE SERVICE PILOTS)

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WOMENS AIRFORCE SERVICE PILOTS 1942 - 1944

Blanche Osborn was born 21-JUL 1916 in Doland, South Dakota. Her parents were Harry Allen Osborne (1884-1953) and Hazel Florence Austin Osborne (1890-1919). Harry later married Mary Louis Austin (1894-1957) after his first wife died. Blanche had two brothers: Maurice and Richard (1913-1962) and three sisters: Mable (1911-1992), Dorris and Mildred (1914-1995).

According to the 1920 Federal Census, Blanche was living with her family on Park Street in Watertown South Dakota. In 1930 Federal Census, the family lived on Thomas Street in David, Oregon. According to the 1940 Federal Census, Blanche was living with her father and stepmother Louise on Holman Lane in South Davis, Oregon. Blanche was 23 years old, working as a bookkeeper and reported she worked 52 hours in the previous year earning $1200 in income. She had completed four years of high school.

Blanche Osborn enlisted in the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) in 1943 and reported for basic training at Avenger Army Airfield in Sweetwater, Texas, where she excelled. She was a member of class 43-W-6 at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas.

Class 43-W-6 Avenger Field

There were two groups lobbying for women to join the Army Air Corps as pilots. In the WFTD (Women's Flying Training Detachment) Jackie Cochran was appointed head of the 319th, and Nancy Love was appointed commander of the WAFS (Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron). On 28-JUN 1943, the two groups were joined together and became the Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) a name chosen by General Hap Arnold. General Henry "Hap" Arnold was the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Air Forces (AAF), leading its massive expansion during World War II. Arnold was pivotal and key in forming the WASP. He approved the plan to train women to fly military aircraft, authorized the merger of existing women's pilot groups into the WASP in 1943, and championed their capability to fly all types of military aircraft. He became the first four-star general in the AAF on 19-MAR 1943.

General "Hap" Arnold

Blanche, like many of the applicants for the WASP in World War II, felt it was her patriotic duty to help win the war. More than 25,000 women applied for the prestigious WASP program but only a select 1,830 were accepted. Only 1,074 earned their WASP Silver Wings.

Blanche's first assignment was Fort Meyers Florida for about a year. While stationed at Fort Myers, Florida, she took gunners up in a B-17 where they fired at targets towed by a B-25. Blanche excelled academically and in her flight performance and was destined for a more challenging job.

Blanche was selected to fly the "heavy bombers." She was one of only seventeen selected for B-17 (Flying Fortress) training. She also flew the B-24 Liberator. Thirteen women graduated from B-17 Transition Flight Training at Lockbourne AAF Base. By completing the B-17 course, the WASP proved that women could fly every type of plane in the military. Blanche and three others were selected to stay at Lockbourne for advanced training, where they completed the B-17 Instructor's Course and received their instrument and altitude ratings. They were the first to fly the unpressurized bomber above 25,000 feet. Soon the four were transferred to the Las Vegas gunnery school where they were used in the engineering squadron to test repaired aircraft.

The program generated significant publicity during the war and Blanche was featured in a famous picture of female pilots walking away from the “Pistol Packin’ Mama”, a B-17 bomber.

L to R, Francis Green, Margaret Kirchner, Ann Waldner, Blanche Osborn.

The most iconic picture of WASP’s features (L to R) Francis Green along with Margaret “Peg” Kirchner, Ann Waldner and Blanche Osborn. The four trained on the B-17 Flying Fortress, one of the largest and most complex aircraft of the war. Their aircraft, the “Pistol Packin’ Mama,” appears in many of the most famous photographs of women pilots during WWII. The picture shows the crew walking confidently across the tarmac with parachutes slung over their shoulders. These images became symbols of the WASP program’s skill, professionalism, and quiet defiance of gender expectations.

The Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) were civilian employees of the United States Department of War. Although the WASP received the same primary, basic and advanced flight training as their U.S. Army Air Force male counterparts, they were not military personnel.

As a WASP, Blanche Osborn performed missions that were essential to the war effort, including:

- Ferrying aircraft from factories to bases
- Transporting personnel and cargo
- Towing aerial gunnery targets for live-fire training
- Testing repaired aircraft to ensure they were safe for combat pilots

These were not symbolic or ceremonial roles. They were dangerous, technical, and required absolute precision.

Since the WASP were considered civilian employees not military members. This meant

No military benefits…No insurance…..No formal recognition

Over the course of the WASP program, between 1942 and December 1944, 38 women lost their lives, 11 in accidents and 27 during missions. Although these women sacrificed their lives in the defense of their country, none were given military funerals, none of their families received military benefits, and no money was provided for transport or burial of their remains by the military. Cochran and Love and fellow WASP pilots contributed to pay expenses for some of the fallen.

Blanche Osborn was discharged on 20-DEC 1944. She was part of the 1,074 women who graduated from the program and was deactivated along with all other WASP members. The program was disbanded due to the, at the time, sufficient availability of male pilots. Blanche finally got her Honorable Discharge certificate in May of 1979, qualifying her for long overdue veterans' benefits. In 1984, she was awarded the following medals and ribbons:

- World War II Victory Medal
- American Theater Ribbon
- American Campaign Medal
- Army Good Conduct Medal

Blanche Osborn Bross was among 1,074 women who flew for the Women's Air Force Service Pilots during World War II.

After the WASP deactivated, Blanche joined the American Red Cross and was sent to Kunming, China. Following her tour in China, Blanche returned to the U.S. to begin a family.

In 1950 according to the Federal Census, Blanche was living on Eldorado Street in Klamath Oregon working for the City Bus Company as a bookkeeper.

17 Girls Really Work Hard Trying to Fly Big U. S. Forts

By Post State Wire.

COLUMBUS, Oct. 23.—Seventeen young women—including a former golf champion and an ex-school teacher—are proving that not even the sky's the limit at Lockbourne Army Air Base here.

Officially they're known as the WASPS—Women's Airforce Service Pilots. Unofficially they're self-designated "flying Guinea pigs" who are proving that women can handle one of America's biggest bombers—the Flying Fortresses now smashing Europe.

If Lockbourne's experimental nine-week course is successful, women may assume the job of ferrying the big forts to replacement pools, releasing hundreds of men for other flying duty.

There's no assurance that the experiment will be successful, but if hard work is a factor, Army officials said, "the gals are in."

Here's how the ex-schoolteacher, Margaret (Peg) Kirchner of Youngstown, O., puts it:

"It's not an easy job to handle a Fortress. It's not so bad taking off, but when you're landing it takes a lot of muscle to get that stick back. You've got to do it all with your left arm because you got to keep that right hand on the throttle. But we love it."

The WASPS start their day at 5 a. m. Fourteen hours later—with lectures, practical mechanical instruction and actual flight training behind them—they're ready for dinner and bed.

But they agreed with Helen Dettweiler of Washington, 1939 women's western open golf titlist, that they wouldn't trade it for any other job.

"There's no comparison," Miss Dettweiler said. "On the links it's all cut and dried. You either do or you don't. I don't think any pilot can say what he really feels, and when you lift a B-17 there's nothing else like it."

From Cincinnati Post 23-OCT 1944

Blanche married Willis Hudson Bross (1915-2010) on 10-AUG 1957 in Eugene Oregon. Blanche and Willis had one son, Charles. Together they moved to Portland where they developed a seaplane flying base. Later, Blanche received a commercial pilot's license and

flew construction crews to work sites. She also spent many years as an accountant and after retirement was an avid golfer.

Blanche Osborn Bross died on 22-JUL 2008 in Portland Oregon. At Blanche's request, no service was held. She was cremated.

Editor's note: We found spelling as Osborn and Osborne.

THE FREMONT

WASP'S FLYING GUINEA PIGS IN ARMY AIR CORPS

Hard At Work Learning To Handle Biggest U. S. Bombers

COLUMBUS, O., Oct. 22.—UP—Seventeen young women—including from a former golf champion to an ex-schoolteacher—are proving that not even the sky's the limit at Lockbourne army air base here.

Officially they're known as the WASP's—Women's Airforce Service Pilots.

Unofficially they're self-designated "flying guinea pigs" who are hard at work proving that women can handle one of America's biggest bombers—the Flying Fortresses now smashing Europe.

Experimental Course

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Lockbourne's "flying guinea pigs" were selected from members of the sixth graduating class at Avenger Field, Sweetwater, Tex., central W. A. S. P. training school from which most graduates are assigned to trainer and fighter plane ferry duty.

List Of Wasps

At Lockbourne they will supplement the 180 flying hours they received at Sweetwater with 30 hours dual instruction on Fortresses and ground school work before they will be permitted to solo.

They now have had 12 hours.

WASP's include: Florence V. Acher, E. Pendleton, Ore.; Patricia A. Bowser, Melrose, Mass.; Doris V. Bristol, Savannah, Miss.; Virginia M. Broome, Atlanta, Ga.; Grace E. Clements, Elmwood, Neb.; Lucille F. Friesen, Burrton, Kan.; Mary P. Gair, Oxford, N. Y.; Eugenie B. Garvin, Payne, O.; Frances G. Green, Galveston, Tex.; Julie E. Ledbetter, Anderson, S. C.; Charlotte L. Mitchell, Tulare, Cal.; Roberta E. Mundt, Berea, Neb.; Blanche V. Osborn, Eugene, Ore.; Dawn Y. Rochow, Long Meadow, Pittsford, N. Y.; Ann M. Waldner, St. Paul, Minn.

THE OLD JUDGE SA

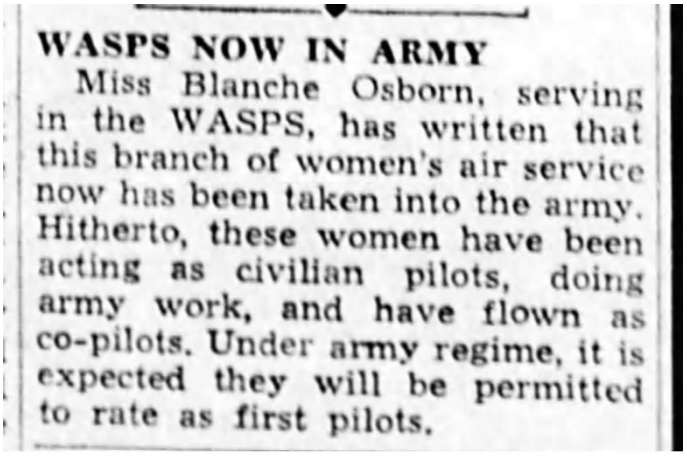
"You were absolutely correc
statement you did, George.
whiskey has been distilled in
over a year."

"That's what I told the b
lodge, Judge, but they wer
thought maybe I was wrong

"No you weren't, George.
matter is that a year befor
the beverage distilling indu
offered its facilities to the gov
companies started to produc

Advertisement.

From The News Messenger 22-OCT 1943



WASPS NOW IN ARMY

Miss Blanche Osborn, serving in the WASPS, has written that this branch of women's air service now has been taken into the army. Hitherto, these women have been acting as civilian pilots, doing army work, and have flown as co-pilots. Under army regime, it is expected they will be permitted to rate as first pilots.

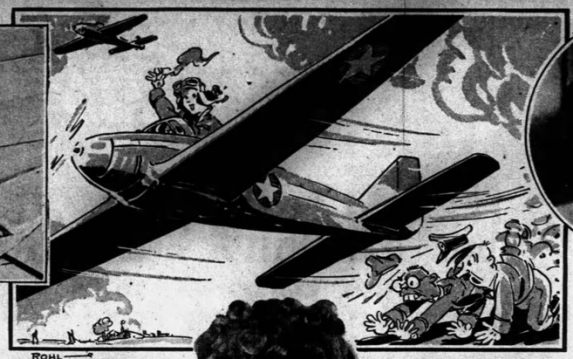
From the Register Guard 11-APR 1944

TRACY STEPS OUT—In one of his infrequent night club appearances, Actor Spencer Tracy recently attended a party. He is with WASP Blanche Osborn, gazing intently at something out of the camera's range.

From the Akron Beacon Journal 17-DEC 1944

St. Louis Wasps--They've a Sting All Their Own

MRS. ADELA RICKS SCHARR of St. Louis was one of the 25 who made up the first group of women ferrying squadron pilots.



LOIS HOLLINGSWORTH of 7748 Ahern street, University City, one of the earlier Wasps to win her wings as a ferrying pilot.

They're the Girls Who Ferry the Planes for the Army Air Forces

By RICHARD N. COWELL,
Globe-Democrat Washington Correspondent.

WASHINGTON, September 4.—A steadily-swelling swarm of Wasps is adding its special sting to the deadly effectiveness of the United States Army Air Forces.

Three St. Louis women and two others from Missouri are numbered among the 216 female flyers who have won their wings as Women's Air Force Service pilots—the formal name given to the Wasps by Gen. Henry H. Arnold, AAF commander, when he christened them a week ago.

Inez Woodward of 5856 Page avenue and Isabel Madison of Crystal City, Mo., were members of the most recent Wasp graduating class. Earlier Wasps from Missouri include Mrs. Adela Ricks Scharr of St. Louis, one of the 25 who made up the first group of women ferrying squadron pilots (the old Wafs); Lois Hollingsworth, 7748 Ahern street, University City, and Elinore Owen of Kansas City.

The army picked perhaps the best-known of all living women flyers to head the Wasps. She is Miss Jacqueline Cochran, in private life the wife of the well-known Wall street financier, Floyd B. Odlum.

She was designated as the air forces' director of women pilots and given the added status of special assistant to Maj. Gen. Barney M. Giles, an assistant chief of the air staff. Her rank is nonmilitary. In fact, all the Wasps are civilian employes of the army.

"Jacky" Cochran's own life story is like something dreamed up in Hollywood. It's difficult to write about the Wasps—whose organization is not yet a year old—without spotlighting their leader, who for years has been ranked with the top-notch men and women in aviation.

HOLDS MANY RECORDS

Miss Cochran, for example, holds four international and 17 national flying records, a larger number, by far, than any other woman flyer in the world when you take into consideration the size, power and speed of the craft she hurls through the skies. In 1938 she won the Bendix Trophy over a field of 11 men and set a new transcontinental speed record for women of 10 hours and 7 minutes.

There isn't room on any mantel for all the cups, medals, certificates and assorted trophies she has accumulated. She was the first woman ever to pilot a bomber across the Atlantic.

Honey-haired and with velvety brown eyes and a willowy figure, Miss Cochran could easily play the lead in that Hollywood version of her own life. Just look what the script writers would have to work with:

Born in Pensacola, Fla., her parents died when she was quite young. A Columbus, Ga., family took the appealing little orphan into their home. At 11 she ran errands for a beauty shop; at 13 she learned to be an operator in the establishment; at 19 she had a beauty shop of her own.

Then New York and a job on Fifth avenue. She dreamed of having her own cosmetics business, and of becoming an airplane pilot to advertise and exploit her products. So, in 1932, she took a six weeks' vacation from her job, went out to Roosevelt Field and learned to fly. Just like that!

She realized she'd need more instruction before she could fly around the country by herself and publicize those beauty aids she was determined to produce under her own name. She took the rest of her savings and went out to California and obtained a limited commercial pilot's license and later a full transport license.

ORGANIZES FIRM

Inside of a year she had organized Jacqueline Cochran Cosmetics, the firm which supported her flying career and made it possible for her to finance the aerial adventures that led to fame as a record-smashing pilot. She was married in 1936 to Mr. Odlum, shrewd and successful financier.

Practically dripping with glamour, she heartily detests the idea of being described as a "glamour girl" and she is thoroughly determined to make the Wasp organization as impersonal as any other unit in the armed services.

Like Amelia Earhart and other women who rose to aviation's heights, flying is entirely a serious subject to Miss Cochran. So far as the actual piloting of aircraft is concerned, she has stoutly insisted that women can do as good a job as men. To the chief of the Wasps a pilot is a pilot—not a man or a woman.

False modesty is completely lacking, when Miss Cochran maintains that her own achievements as a pilot can be duplicated by any other woman flyer who gets the same training and the same opportunities.

The army, wisely, recognized her genius as a business executive, as well as her record in aviation, when Miss Cochran was named head of the Wasps. She has assumed the responsibility, in co-operation with the assistant chiefs of air staff, of determining "measures for effective utilization of women pilots, their training, recruiting, standards of performance, conduct and welfare."

SEEKS HELP

It was only last September that the army decided to use women pilots to help meet the demand for noncombat airmen. Miss Cochran, who had been in England performing special duties for the British Air Transport Auxiliary, previously had designed a program to supply the AAF with trained women pilots who could release men for combat or other duty.

On her return from England Miss Cochran was assigned to an important role in the program launched by the AAF last fall. The AAF organized an operational group of women flyers known as the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron and a separate training unit known as the Women's Flying Training Detachment. Miss Cochran directed the latter group.

Mrs. Scharr, who is a native of St. Louis, was one of the first 25 Wafs who were trained at Wilmington, Del. A University of Missouri graduate she had learned to fly and before joining the Wafs had been a ground-course instructor at Jefferson College, St. Louis Y. M. C. A., and later became a flight and ground instructor at the Robertson School of Aeronautics in St. Louis.

Her husband, stationed at the Lambert Field air base, was her first passenger.

Barbara Poole, convent-reared Hackensack, N. J., girl, who learned to fly in St. Louis, is another of the first 25 Wafs. When she received her first pilot's license, back in 1932, she was the youngest licensed woman pilot—18—at that time.

EXPERIMENTAL PROJECTS

The training and operations units for women which the AAF launched last September, were begun as experimental projects. Requirements for the first group of Wafs were so strict that few women flyers could meet them. The requirements this year have been relaxed and the training courses for Wasps have been altered to fit women, who don't have the same flying experience when they enter, as the first group of commercial flyers that entered the Wafs.

The Wasps now have several hundred aspiring young women pilots in training at Avenger Field at Sweetwater, Tex., from which a class of 116, including two Missourians, was graduated a short time ago.

When they are accepted in the Wasps they receive a training pay of $150 a month. The training period is no holiday. It is divided into a primary course, taken under civilian flying school instructors, and later basic and advanced courses, taught by army instructors. The full course requires six months. Upon graduation a Wasp's pay immediately jumps to $250 a month and there is a per diem allowance of $6 when on flying missions, plus transportation to and from the pilot's operating base.

At Avenger Field the girls live in barracks—attractive, low ranch-type buildings. They are divided into squadrons and classes and they start a "school" regime that includes 13 hours a day. Classes are divided into "flights," each having a student leader responsible for the discipline. The "honor system" is in operation at the field and, according to Miss Cochran, the disciplinary problem is almost nonexistent.

"The girls are a carefully-selected group to start with. They're serious-minded young women whose ambition is to learn to fly and they go into the service determined to take advantage of the training offered them," an army spokesman pointed out. "They're not the play-girl type or they wouldn't be here."

QUALIFICATION FACTORS

To get into the Wasps a girl must qualify as to citizenship and must pass a rigid physical examination. The age limit is 21 to 34 and she must have a high school or equivalent education. Every candidate must have a minimum of 35 hours of previous flying experience. None is accepted without a personal interview with an authorized recruiting officer.

Girls from every level of American life are listed on the Wasp rolls . . . Junior Leaguers, girls who have worked in factories, young housewives, sometimes with several children, high school and college students, etc., etc.

Matrimony is no bar to a Wasp career, nor is motherhood. Quite a few of the most skilled Wasp pilots have husbands in the armed services; many have children.

When a Wasp receives her diploma and starts on her $250-per-month job she is assigned to one of the operations air bases, where she will be stationed under army supervision. She is subject to call at any hour of the day or night but she will average about 10 days a month at her base.

The original Wafs had only one job—flying light type planes on ferrying missions, that is, shuttling the craft around the country to points where the army wanted them. Nowadays, the Wasps fly 16 different kinds of planes, including advanced training ships that are just about as difficult to handle as the biggest bombers.

The Wasps also perform other duties, but Miss Cochran and the Army Air Forces aren't making them public, just yet. Miss Cochran's goal is to make the members of the Wasps useful to the army in as many pilot capacities as is possible.

NOT MONEY-MAD

The Wasps, she says, haven't the same feeling about a pay check as women in other jobs. They know, for instance, that their rate of pay remains the same, despite length of service or the varying difficulty of their individual assignments.

The Wasps, in fact, are women with just one main purpose in life: Flying.

Like the Wacs, Waves, Women Marines and Spars, they admire the attractiveness of the service uniforms and before long they'll be wearing their own, exclusive model. The details of the Wasp uniform's design, etc., are being

Continued on Page 7C.

ISABEL MADISON of Crystal City, Mo., was a member of the most recent Wasp graduating class.

JACQUELINE COCHRAN ODLUM has been designated as the Air Forces' Director of Women Pilots. Her rank is nonmilitary.

INEZ WOODWARD of 5856 Page boulevard, is pictured here in winter flying suit on the wing of a Fairchild PT-19A.

FASCINATIONS AND PET HATES

By Katharine Brush

I AM FASCINATED BY: The psychology of anonymous-letter writers. . . . The news in those old newspapers you find on closet shelves. . . . The ghosts of their pictures and possessions—of their whole design for living, indeed—that people leave written in faded squares and rectangles, with frames of dust, on the walls and floors of rooms they've occupied and vacated. . . . The sound of rhythmic spanking that goes on all day, every day, in reducing salons. . . . The fact that navy men prepare for battle by taking baths and donning clean underwear . . . And the fact that in Brazil you tip the servants at the houses where you dine; and you call any male who's a college graduate "Doctor," automatically; and when you address a letter to a Mr. and Mrs. Brazilian, you address it "Illustrious Mr. Doctor (then the name) and Most Excellent Mrs."

◆

I WISH I HAD A NICKEL: For every time I've found myself in a telephone booth without one . . . for every fire I've ever started by by dumping an ash tray into a

waste basket . . . for every fresh coat of nail polish I've ruined by reaching into my handbag for the money to pay for it . . . for every letter marked "Personal" I've received that wasn't (first it) . . . for every time I've lighted the wrong end of a cork-tipped cigarette . . . for every order of fish I've reluctantly eaten since meat was rationed.

◆

I STRONGLY DISAPPROVE OF: the word "hops" for dances . . . melancholy drunks . . . child stars with operatic voices . . . slacks and peasant handkerchiefs and beach shoes on the streets of cities . . . drinks with fruit floating in them . . . any more new reducing diets . . . perfumes that you can't ignore . . . lettuce in the bottom of my shrimp cocktail, where I had hoped to find more shrimp . . . and, by the same token, all those bits of tired old apple in the bottom of my fresh fruit cup. . . .

◆

OTHER PET HATES OF MINE INCLUDE: the rhumba, unless danced by experts . . . suburbs with fancy artsy-craftsy names . . . those pseudo-comical cocktail napkins with jolly little messages on them . . . those refugees now in our midst who loathe American life, and say so . . . anchovies . . . poinsettias . . . loudly-

ticking bedside clocks . . . those broken wicker chairs you find in rented summer cottages . . . people

Continued on Page 7C.

From St. Louis Globe Democrat 5-SEP 1943