

Commander's Call Topics



March 26, 2015

"The first lesson is that you can't lose a war if you have command of the air, and you can't win a war if you haven't."

Jimmy Doolittle
American Aviator
(1896–1993)

Every President since Franklin Roosevelt has [proclaimed](#) that

March is [Red Cross Month](#)

Failure Was Never an Option

As Women's History Month 2015 comes to a close, the role of women in the Air Force has never been more keenly felt. Taken collectively, the WASPs (Women's Airforce Service Pilots), WAFS (The Women's Auxiliary Flying Squadron) and the WAF (Women in the Air Force) paved the way – often an uncertain way – for today's Airmen, pilots and astronauts, nurses, broadcasters and veterans who just happen to be women.

It would be both a blessing and a curse if we could name here the thousands of women who have served as role models. It would be a blessing because it is so inspiring to acknowledge and appreciate the stories that have helped create and nurture us; a curse because it would take such a very long time. Rather, let's pick up on the theme of this year's National Women's History Month, "Weaving the Stories of Women's Lives," and gain strength and perspective from the extraordinary women who have shaped and defined the roles of women in the Air Force.

In addition to the WASPs and WAFS whose contributions are a legendary part of World War II and the Korean conflict, we hear the stories of the Air Force-supplied planes and nurses working together to secure the success of "Operation Babylift" out of Tan Son Nhut Air Base Vietnam in April 1975. The following year, during America's bicentennial, President Ford signed legislation lifting the ban on women in the military academies, and the separate designation of "WAF" was abolished as women applied to and were accepted into the elite educational system that would, in 1980, graduate them as officers, as well.

The war in the Persian Gulf (1990-91) deployed 40,000 American women during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, and by the end of the war, Congress repealed laws that banned women from flying in combat.

Individual accomplishments also flourished. In 1971, Jeanne M. Holm was promoted to brigadier general, the first female Airman to reach that rank. Two years later, 1973, she earned a promotion to major general. A very different individual accomplishment belongs to Air Force Lt. Sharon Frontiero who challenged the Air Force status quo and changed military family life forever. She was the plaintiff in a lawsuit against the Air Force, which was ultimately heard by the U.S. Supreme Court. In that case the court held as unconstitutional the inequities in benefits for the dependents of military women when compared with those for the dependents of military men. Until then, housing and medical benefits were not authorized for a woman's dependents, nor were the privileges at the commissary and post exchange.

In 1982, the Air Force selected the first woman aviator for Test Pilot School, and by 1993 – 11 years later – women were receiving fighter pilot training. That same year (1993), Lt. Gen. Susan G. Helms (then Maj. Helms), a member of the first class of the U.S. Air Force Academy to graduate women, became the first American military woman in space as part of the Space Shuttle Endeavor team.

History is a grand adventure, especially when it is fueled by focused energy, produces desirable results and embraces the mantra "And I will not fail."

Martha J. Lockwood
Chief, Information Products, AFPRO

► TRENDING...

"Less than half of our combat career squadrons are sufficiently ready for a high-end fight," said [Lt. Gen. Tod D. Wolters](#), the deputy chief of staff for operations, plans and requirements for Headquarters Air Force, [testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Airland](#).

► RESOURCES

Website access to the following resources can be gained by clicking on the name.

[AF.mil](#)

[Airman magazine](#)

[Military OneSource/HomeFront](#)

[Air Force Personnel Center](#)

[Air Reserve Personnel Center](#)

[Department of Defense News](#)

[Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

[TRICARE](#)

[U.S. Government Website](#)

[Air Force Association](#)

[Scholarships](#)

[Air Force Safety Center](#)

[Civil Service Employment](#)

[Opportunities](#)

[NAF Employment Opportunities](#)

[Air Force Bands/Outreach](#)

► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

March 26, 1996 -- The F-4 Phantom line retired from active service.

March 27, 1916 -- Pilots with the 1st Aero Squadron aircraft started carrying mail and dispatches for the Mexican Punitive Expedition.

March 28, 1935 -- Dr. Robert Goddard launched the first rocket with gyroscopic controls to a height of 4,800 feet and a distance of 13,000 feet. It reached 550 mph.

March 29, 1923 -- At Dayton, Ohio, three Fédération Aéronautique Internationale records were established. First, Lt. A. Pearson flew a Verville Sperry R-3 at 167.77 mph more than 500 kilometers. Next, lieutenants Harold R. Harris and Ralph Lockwood flew a DH-4L with a Liberty 400 HP engine at 127.42 mph for the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) record. Third, Lt. Russell L. Maughan flew a Curtiss R-6 at 236.587 mph for a record over a straightaway course.

March 30, 1963 -- Strategic Air Command accepted its first Titan II launch facility, which was at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona.

March 31, 1951 -- The 3rd Air Rescue Squadron used the H-19 to retrieve 18 United Nations personnel from behind enemy lines. This was the first use of this type helicopter in a special operations mission.

April 1, 1942 -- Air Corps Proving Ground became Proving Ground Command with its main base at Eglin Field, Florida.

► CURRENT ISSUES

[Sequestration threatens America's airpower advantage](#)

Written testimony released at the Senate Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Airland hearing on March 19, stated that ..."a return to sequestration-level funding would result in a less ready, less capable and less viable Air Force that is unable to fully execute the defense strategy."

[Doolittle Tokyo Raiders to receive Congressional Gold Medal](#)

Heroism, valor, skill and service are the hallmarks of a group of 80 men who, 73 years ago, took off from an aircraft carrier on a top-secret mission to bomb Japan and flew into history as the "Doolittle Tokyo Raiders." This year they will be recognized with a Congressional Gold Medal.

► FAMILY HEALTH AND SAFETY

[Cybercrime: How it affects you](#)

With tax season in full swing, cybercriminals are preying on the unsuspecting – and that could be just about anyone.

► PERSONNEL ISSUES

[Air Force Cool program kicks off](#)

Air Force Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) Program, the newest course of study launched by the Community College of the Air Force to offer a job-related certification or license.

► ENVIRONMENT, SPACE AND TECHNOLOGY

[AF releases results of Space Launch Process review](#)

The independent review panel tasked by [Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James](#) to evaluate the process for SpaceX as an Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV) provider has announced Phase One results.

For more information on Air Force heritage, visit <http://www.airforcehistory.af.mil>

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