

BACKGROUND OF THE WOMEN'S FLYING TRAINING PROGRAM of the ARMY AIR FORCES

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The idea of training and using women to ferry Army planes from factory to field and for other non-combatant flying within the United States originated with Miss [Jacqueline Cochran](#) returned from England in 1940, where she had observed and participated in the ferrying work in which English women were actively engaged.

She conferred with [Gen. H.H.Arnold](#) in July, 1940, to determine the availability of establishing a similar program in this country. The idea meeting approval, Miss Cochran spent several months conducting a survey of the women pilot potentiality in this country. She found out exactly how many women in the United States held licenses, how many hours in the air they had to their credit, what types of planes they flew, where they lived, and what occupations they were engaged in. She established a card index file that would enable her to contact practically all of them at a moment's notice.

Next step was a letter from Miss Cochran to all the women on her list, asking if they would be interested in attending an Army-conducted school from which graduates would be assigned to ferrying duty with the Army Air Forces. The response was immediate and gratifying. A large percentage of these women were ready and eager to fly for Uncle Sam and put their knowledge and skill to work where it would do the most good for the war effort. The unanimous remark was "When do we start?"

Miss Cochran was then assigned to work with the AAF Flying Training Command, the Command that is charged with training all pilots, navigators, bombardiers and aerial gunners for the Army, of which Maj. Gen. Barton K. Yount is Commanding General. Miss Cochran was made the Director of Women's Flying Training, with offices at Headquarters of the Flying Training Command in Ft. Worth. She assumed her new post on October 19, 1942.

After personal examination by Miss Cochran and passing a stiff physical examination by Army medics, the first group of women reported for training at the Municipal airport in Houston, Texas, where a Contract Flying School, operated by Aviation Enterprises, Inc., had been given the contract to train the women flyers. The Army exercises its usual supervision through a local commanding officer and his staff and inspections from higher Headquarters.

The operation at Houston was similar to the other civilian-operated Contract Flying Schools in the country that are training men cadets in the primary phase of their course – with the exception that the women trainees received all three phases of training at the one school, Primary, Basic and Advanced.

The women, all of whom had from 200 to 400 hours in light planes before they enrolled,

were given the regular Army course for aviation cadets, modified slightly as regarded physical training and deleting the combat phases of flight training, which they would not need for non-combatant ferrying work in this country. They flew the regular Army training planes, the PT-13 and PT-19 in Primary stages, the BT-13 in Basic, the AT-6 in Single-Engine Advanced and the AT-9 in Twin-Engine Advanced.

The graduates of this first class will complete their course on April 24, 1943, and will be assigned to various units of the Army Air Forces for duty. Subsequent classes are still in training in Houston, but will gradually be moved to the new school at Sweetwater, Texas. The Houston airport was, and is, pretty crowded, and it was thought best to concentrate all women's training at a field especially built for Army training. The Sweetwater School opened with a class of its own in February and additional classes have made it larger than Houston in point of personnel. The exact number in training at both schools is a military secret, but it runs into the hundreds and the program is being expanded.

These women trainees are not in the Army and are not yet in the WAFS. They are on Civil Service status at a pay of \$150 per month while in training and \$2800 per annum upon graduation and assignment to duty with a ferrying unit of the Army Air Forces.

As the program has expanded and proved itself, the initial requirement of at least 200 hours to enter the course has been reduced to 35 hours. The age limit is still 21 to 34 and they have to pass the same tough physical examination. Since all the girls are going to receive the same thorough Army training anyway, it was not thought necessary to insist that they first have a great number of hours in light civilian craft.

The official designations of the two schools are:

319 AAF Women's Flying Training Detachment, Municipal Airport, Houston, Texas

318 AAF Women's Flying Training Detachment, Sweetwater, Texas

Note: It is not permitted to mention the number of girls, planes, or the number or percentage of eliminations at any of the schools.

END

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