

# WASP BETTY TACKABERRY BLAKE, 43-W-1

Born: 1920, HONOLULU, HAWAII

Graduate: University of Hawaii

Stationed: Longbeach, CA

Assignment: Ferry Pilot

Aircraft: Luscombe, PT 19, BT-13, AT-6, UC-78, P-40, P-39, P-63, P-47, PL-5, B-26, C-47, B-17B, B-25

*'Just believe in yourself. Study and work hard, and you can get to your goal, no matter what it is, if you just believe in yourself and try'.*

Born in Hawaii while it was still a territory, Betty spent her early years reading books about aviation. When she was 14, she met Amelia Earhart who encouraged her wanting to learn to fly and invited the teenager to watch her take off when she flew solo to Oakland, California. According to Betty, "that cinched it."

Betty had her first flight at age 15, then hitchhiked to the airport and did bookkeeping for flying lessons. She attended University of Hawaii, was accepted into the college's Civilian Pilot Training program and earned her license. She then flew tourists around the Islands.

On Saturday, Dec. 6, 1941, she had passed tests for commercial license and instructor rating and was scheduled to fly a tourist around the island at 6:30 am. He canceled that afternoon. Sunday morning, Dec. 7, 1941 she witnessed the bombing of Pearl Harbor from her family's balcony on a high hill overlooking the Harbor. Riveting stories of the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, blackouts, driving w/ blue gel over the headlights and listening to Tokyo Rose on the radio. Three months later, she married her fiancé, a Naval Ensign whose ship had been sunk on Dec 7. He was soon reassigned to the US and they came to the States in a convoy of ships.



When her husband was shipped out on an overseas assignment, Betty heard of Jacqueline Cochran's new experimental flying training program to teach women to fly military aircraft. She applied and, with her large number of pilot hours, was accepted as a member of the first class.

She completed 5 months of AAF flight training at the Houston Municipal Airport, graduated, and received orders to report to Long Beach to ferry aircraft for the Air Transport Command Ferrying Division.

Her first assignments were to ferry new training aircraft to bases all over America. Within a short time, the AAF opened up pursuit training schools to select WASP. There she learned to fly all types of pursuits. Her orders then were primarily to ferry fighter aircraft to ports of embarkation on the East coast for shipment to overseas bases. Her accounts of her experiences are riveting.

After the WASP were disbanded, she raised two sons, was a reporter, and a craftsman, eventually designing a bean bag frog that was featured in the film, "The April Fools" w/ Jack Lemmon & Catherine Deneuve.

A charming, sophisticated, lovely lady, Betty Blake is one of the best WASP storytellers --with so many stories to tell!

BETTY BLAKE LINK:

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.47086/>

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## WASP MARION HODGSON, 43-W-5

Born: Athens, GA

Graduate: Univ. of Georgia

Stationed: Love Field

Assignment: Ferry Pilot

Aircraft: Piper Cub, PT-19, BT-13, AT-6, UC-78, C-45, AT-7, AT-11

*"Put God first, family next, and then do whatever you want to do...whatever's needed. The sky's the limit. When you're needed, be there. You can do anything with God's help"*



A truly remarkable Georgia 'peach'. Marion's father was the Athletic Director at the University of Georgia, so she and her sister never lacked for male companions. Her main interest in high school, other than boys, was playing basketball, and she was very good.

In 1941 she took the Civilian Pilot Training course at the University of Georgia, graduating that year with a private pilot's license and a degree in Journalism.

She then went to Chicago and worked as a journalist, but when she heard about the AAF experimental flying training program, she applied, was accepted and headed for Texas.

Marion was in the first class to arrive at Avenger Field. There were aviation cadets still there who were in training, just as she was. The 'powers to be' soon decided that they must be transferred, because having the two sexes on the same field,

training to fly military aircraft, was not working.

Upon graduating and receiving her WASP wings, Marion was sent to Love Field, Dallas, to be a member of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ferrying Group. She ferried aircraft, primarily new training aircraft, to training bases all over America.

After the WASP, she married her fiancé, a Marine pilot. For the first three years, with no children, she spent much of her time writing—mostly about the WASP. Then she had 2 children, and when they became independent, she began writing again in a



variety of venues—articles for McCall's, Guidepost, etc., and books, several of which have been published, with much success. Marion was a 'writer', who became a 'pilot', who became a writer' again.

While Russia was still the USSR and Gorbachev was in power, Marion and several WASP were guests of the Russian government, invited there to meet their women pilots of WWII. Marion smuggled

3 Bibles into Russia and selectively gave them to 3 different Russian women. Each was overjoyed to receive it. (Her story of this is fascinating.)

Marion is featured in the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force' Museum in Savannah, Georgia. She is a lovely lady and a much sought after speaker. Her "WINNING MY WINGS" is one of the best WASP books available.

I believe every Congressperson would feel honored to meet her.

MARION HODGSON LINK:

[http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records\\_all/wasp\\_articles/hodgson\\_1989.pdf](http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records_all/wasp_articles/hodgson_1989.pdf)

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## WASP DEANIE BISHOP PARRISH, 44-W-4

Born: DeFuniak Springs, FL

Graduate: Univ. of Houston, 1976

Stationed: Greenville Army Air Base, MS; Tyndall Army Air Base, Panama City, FL

Assignment: B-26 Tow Target Pilot, Engineering Test Pilot, Administrative, Ferrying

Aircraft: Piper Cub, Aeronica, PT-19, PT-17, BT-13, AT-6, UC-78, AT-11, B-26

*"Failure is not failure unless you let it be. It is simply a change in direction. Count your many blessings and move on."*

Deanie grew up believing that 'with God's help, nothing is impossible'. 64 years ago,

while working as a bank teller in Avon Park, Fl, she asked a primary cadet instructor why, just because she was a girl, she couldn't learn to fly like the aviation cadets? She became the first female in her home town to learn to fly . Her experience loosing her stick on her first solo flight made the front page of the local paper and still reminds her that, 'with God's help, anything is possible!



When she heard about a program at Avenger Field to teach qualified young women pilots to fly military aircraft, she applied and was accepted. She boarded a train in Florida and traveled to Sweetwater, where she trained for 7 months. When she graduated and became a WASP, she was assigned to Greenville AFB, Miss as an engineering test pilot in BT-13s and UC-78s. She was transferred to Tyndall AFB, Fla., completed B-26 school and was retained as an air-to-air B-26 tow target pilot to train gunners for combat (using live ammunition).

After the WASP were disbanded, Deanie married a career AAF B-29 pilot. In 1975, with 2 daughters in college and having volunteered for 15 years in a Houston hospital, she entered the University of Houston, graduating Suma Cum Laude in 1979.

She served as Houston Memorial Hospital Volunteer President, Charter Member Waco Welcome Corps, was inducted into the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame, "2005" and the 99's International Forest of Friendship. In 2005, she was awarded the "Sprit of Women Award"-- Women's Chamber of Commerce of Texas.

In 2005, the Silver Wings Detachment of Arnold Air Society at Texas Christian University was named in her honor. She served as the National WASP Secretary from 2005 to 2007. Over five years ago, she and her daughter, Nancy, convinced the Sweetwater City Commissioners that the WASP deserved a museum at Avenger Field. Impossible? She was a founding member of the Board of Directors of the National WASP WWII Museum and served as the first Facilities Chairman.



Deanie is an expert in the history of the WASP, having personally interviewed over 100 WASP in 19 states and has volunteered her time over the last 10 years to ensure that the WASP history is not forgotten. She is also a sought after motivational speaker.

Deanie is featured in the ["FLYGIRLS OF WWII"](#) traveling exhibit. She is also responsible for all the text panels in the exhibit. The FLYGIRLS opening photo of a WASP strapping on a parachute is of

Deanie, taken in 1944.

She still believes that 'With God's help, nothing is impossible.'

DEANIE PARRISH link: <http://www.wingsacrossamerica.us/deanie.htm>

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## BETTY PFISTER, 43-W-5

Born: Great Neck, Long Island

Graduate: Bennington College

Stationed: New Castle Army Air Base, DE; Williams Army Air Base, AZ

Assignments: Ferry Pilot, Engineering Test Pilot, Liason

Aircraft: Piper Cub, PT-19, PT-26, BT-13, AT-6, AT-11, B-24, B-26, B-17

*"We all set our own priorities. As you go through life, maybe your priorities need to be an artist, or maybe a musician, or any field you can think of. It doesn't have to be aviation. If you want to do anything in life badly enough, you can do it!"*

Betty started flying while a freshman at Bennington College in Vermont. She graduated with a degree in Marine Biology and immediately went to Texas to enter Class 43-4. While there, her brother, a Navy pilot, was killed due to a catapult failure on take-off. She went home to be with her family for a month. When she returned, she was moved back to Class 43-5.



After graduation she was stationed at New Castle Army Air Base, New Jersey and ferried aircraft, primarily training aircraft, for the Ferry Command.

After WASP deactivation, she worked as a flight instructor and then flew as a co-pilot for several non-scheduled airlines, flying DC-3 type aircraft. At one time she owned and raced a P-39 Bell Aircobra. She married and had three daughters.

Her after-WASP accomplishments in the world of aviation are amazing. In 1963 she received her commercial rotorcraft rating, and in 1966 she planned and supervised the construction of the Aspen Valley Hospital Heliport. This was the first hospital heliport in Colorado.

In 1968 she founded the Pitkin County Air Rescue Group and remained president until retiring in 1991. This volunteer organization of local pilots initiated searches for downed aircraft in the Aspen area, which had saved 32 lives by 2001.

Betty was also instrumental in getting the FAA to provide and staff a control tower at

the Aspen Airport, even though the airport did not meet normal FAA tower criteria.

After receiving her balloon rating, she organized the Snowmass Hot Air Balloon Races from 1976 to 1993.

In 1973 and 1978 she was a member of the US Helicopter Team, competing in the World Championships.

She was the founder and first chapter member of the Aspen Chapter of the Ninety Nines, International Women Pilots, and in 1984 was inducted into the Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame.



She has received many other awards and has memberships in many organizations. To me, her most important contributions to society came after the WASP. I believe she would tell you that it was because of her WASP experiences that she received the opportunities to accomplish so much in the world of aviation after the WASP were disbanded.

I have never heard her speak publically, but I know she would be great. She is a very 'classy' lady.

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## WASP HELEN WYATT SNAPP, 43-W-4

BORN: Washington, DC

STATIONED: Camp Davis, NC; Liberty Field, Camp Stewart, GA

ASSIGNMENTS: Tow Target Pilot, Simulated Strafing, Night Tracking, Remote Controlled Drones, Instructor

AIRCRAFT: PT-19, BT-13, AT-6, UC-78, A-24, PQ-8, PQ-14

Born May 1, 1918, Helen recalls that, at five years old, an airplane went over their home and they all ran outside to see it. Then at eight years old, they moved to Washington, and she remembers sitting on the curb on Pennsylvania Avenue to watch the Lindbergh parade pass by. She later followed the media attention given Amelia Earhart and Jacqueline Cochran and decided that's what she wanted to do some day.



She dropped out of college to make some money in order to pay for flying lessons. Then when the college implemented the Civilian Flying Training program, she worked and attended college and took aviation ground school classes in the evenings.

Helen married her childhood sweetheart, Ira Snapp, and when he was shipped overseas, she applied and was accepted into the training program for women to fly for the Army Air Force. After completing her training and graduating, she received orders to report to Camp Davis, North Carolina, an anti-aircraft base, for training.

After successfully completing the training, she was transferred to Liberty Field, Fort (Camp) Stewart, Georgia, another anti-aircraft base. There she towed targets for anti-aircraft artillery practice, flew radar, searchlight, camouflage, tracking and strafing missions. She was one of six WASP who were assigned to R-Flight, which was TOP SECRET and on an off-limits part of the field. The WASP learned to fly radio controlled PQ-8 drone planes, which led to the development of the more sophisticated remote controlled planes used by the USAF today. She remembers this as a scary experience and one that could be quite dangerous.

Following the deactivation of the WASP, Helen returned to her home in Virginia. When her husband, Ira Snapp, returned from service with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and Quartermaster Corp, she continued to serve her country by going on a road show for the Army--with her husband and six other officers to present displays and talk about Normandy, promoting Savings Bonds all over the US.

Although we have not had the opportunity to interview Helen, she is a first class lady and remembers in detail her time flying for her country. She attended the opening of the Fly Girls exhibit at WIMSA.

