

Six Principles for Sixteen War Months - the WASP's Mark on Our Lives

From the very first letter written by then-civilian pilot Jacqueline Cochran in 1939 to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt requesting the government to hire female pilots in non-combat operations, the U.S. Army Air Forces Auxiliary Women Airforce Service Pilots have made their mark on American history during their service between the years 1943-1944 and much beyond (Martin, 2021). This was only made possible when the WASPs aimed high, believed in themselves, used their brain, were ready to go, never quit, and expected to win at all times through thick and thin across decades. Here are specific instances of each of the guiding principles being utilized for success.

Aim High

The WASP wasn't just a war-effort job creator for women; it was a non-military organization that ran half of all domestic combat aircraft in WWII with 1074 pilots (Wackerfuss, n.d).

Believe in Yourself

In a time where women and colored people faced vicious, legally-enshrined discrimination from both employers and much of the public, WASPs came from every socioeconomic and cultural background. Specifically, there were two WASPs of Chinese descent, two Hispanic WASPs, and one native WASP in the corps (McLellan, 2000).

Use Your Brain

Although the initial requirement of a private piloting license and 200 flight hours for all new WASP enlistees was removed, WASP selection remained one of the toughest in the country. Out of 25,000 applicants, only 1,820 were accepted, and of those accepted, over $\frac{2}{5}$ dropped out during training.

Ready to Go

While WASPs were initially trusted only to fly tiny planes in unimportant missions, they proved to higher officers very quickly that women could fly any aircraft, from glides to the largest bombers. Their excellence eventually convinced General H. H. Arnold, chief of the USAAF, to make WASPs receive the exact flight training as their male counterparts. 38 WASPs were killed in action to help the nation succeed.

Never Quit

Right after WWII ended, while the Army promised to extoll their accomplishments, most memory of the WASPs quickly disappeared as their records were classified and new generations with no memory of the war came about. However, in the mid-1970s, when women were again allowed to undergo flight training, former WASPs advocated to the House of Representatives for the bare minimum status of veteranship against the wishes of other veteran groups like the American Legion, which they did get limitedly. Regardless, without giving up their fight for equal recognition, between 1977 and 2010, all WASPs received honorable discharges, WWII and American Theatre Victory Medals, and Congressional Gold Awards.

Expect to Win

None of the above, from breaking racial barriers to earning Congress' highest honor, would be possible without first having self-confidence in eventual triumph. If the WASPs had self-doubt or tried any less hard to succeed, they wouldn't have been as consequential. It's equally important not only to remember all that the WASPs did for the nation, but also to carry on their legacy and guiding principles to be implemented in daily life (Wackerfuss, n.d).

Works Cited

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2. McLellan, Dennis. California Times-Los Angeles Times. *Adding a Missing Piece to Mosaic of American History*. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-oct-23-cl-40608-story.html>. 23 Oct. 2000. Accessed 28 Jan. 2023.
3. Wackerfuss, Andrew T. United States Air Force Historical Support Division. *Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)*. <https://www.afhistory.af.mil/FAQs/Fact-Sheets/Article/458964/womens-airforce-service-pilots-wasp/>. Accessed 28 Jan. 2023.