One of the most impressive qualities WASP Shirley Kruse possessed was her ability to treat everyone as if he or she were the most important person in the room. Shirley would graciously give interviews to reporters, chat with historians and then turn around and sit down to be at eye level with a 7-year-old girl who wanted to know about being a pilot. The WASP Museum emulates Shirley’s actions which are indicative of all WASP. Its mission is to preserve the history, promote the legacy, and protect the airfield of the WASP but to what end? We do it for the next generation.

In the past five years the Museum has doubled its campus, created all-new exhibits, purchased aircraft, and launched new educational programs. These strategic plans have been executed with students in mind. Today the Museum is elated to announce two new projects that will benefit our youngsters. Because of a generous grant from the Andrews Foundation of Abilene, the Museum will be able to add two annual events for our area schoolchildren. The first is WASP Aviation Day slated for September followed by Night at the Museum in March.

The second project is the completion of fundraising for Phase 3B. Because of the generosity of hundreds of donors across the country, a $450,000 private donation, and grants from the Prairie Foundation and the Wayne and JoAnn Moore Foundation, the Museum will be able to complete its outdoor exhibit space by late 2025. This phase will include a granite ground map of the U.S. marked with the WASP’s duty bases. This outdoor map which fills the plaza will create many opportunities for students to “fly” from base to base calculating routes, fuel, and time in the air as they look across the taxiways of Avenger Field.

Expansion is not for the past but for the future. If WASP history is not to be lost again, it must matter to the youngest generation. Students will need to esteem the stories, inspiration, and values imparted by the WASP and their legacy pilots. Some learners will use new information to go into various fields, but it is the goal of the Museum that many motivated students will enter aviation and carry on the legacy of the WASP.
You may have heard your WASP friends say the wind always blows hard at Avenger Field. They are correct. Never does it blow harder than in March and April. With these blustery gales, along with occasional rain and hail, though, we get green prairies covered in gorgeous yellow wildflowers that somehow survive the harsh elements around them.

Our spring activities have kind of felt like our strong wind. When March came, we were gearing up for three air shows plus our own Homecoming. We experienced a fierce storm of activities as we coordinated airplanes and pilots, educational activities, supplies, and transportation for each airshow. Even stronger were the winds of Homecoming preparation involving speakers, banquets, volunteers, safety crews and performing aircraft. When May came, we felt a little wind burned, hair in tangled up mess, panting for energy. Amid it all, however, was a peaceful satisfaction bringing the same kind of beauty and pleasure as those yellow wildflowers bring to the prairie. The work is worth it, and we will do it all again for Oshkosh and our fall airshow season.

**Fabulous Facts**

- In addition to our own Homecoming, the Museum took airplanes and crew to Wings over Cowtown in Fort Worth, The Great Texas Air Show at Randolph Air Force Base San Antonio, and Big Country Air Fest at Abilene Regional Airport.
- At each air show, we served an average of 500 families and students over the course of two days by entertaining them with the story of the WASP, giving them aircraft tours, and facilitating educational activities such as riveting and navigation.
- The Museum debuted its new WASP storyboards told in comic book style that entertain and educate both parents and children.

If you live in the following cities and can volunteer at your local airshow, please contact Lisa Taylor at listataylor@waspmuseum.org.

---

The Official National WASP World II Museum is flying to Oshkosh in a UC-78 Bobcat. Visit the Bobcat, one of only five airworthy models, in Warbird Alley July 22nd through the 27th. You can find our team with the Bobcat or in the Woman Venture tent talking about the WASP and selling swag in support of our mission. We also invite you to our presentations:

- **MONDAY, JULY 22ND 11:30 AM, WOMEN VENTURE TENT, WASP in Their Own Words**
  Enjoy hearing stories and learning about WASP experiences straight from the mouths of these trailblazing pilots. This unique presentation style incorporates video clips of six different WASP interviews with the live stories of four second generation legacy pilots. Follow along with Peggy Phillips, Lucy Young, Trish Beckman and Kathy Cosand as they introduce video clips and expand WASP stories with tales of their own.

- **TUESDAY, JULY 23RD 8:30 AM, SKYSCAPE THEATER, Girls of Sweetwater**
  See the new WASP short film by acclaimed filmmaker Jon Anderson. This story contains never before seen interviews with several WASP. With heartwarming and funny anecdotes, you’ll learn something new.
THE ROSA LEA FULLWOOD MEEK COLLECTION

This remarkable photo album showcases the journey of Rosa Lea Fullwood Meek, 43-W-4, during her time at Avenger Field, capturing moments from her training and her experiences at her assigned duty bases. This captivating album is now part of our current exhibit, WASP in the Spotlight, giving visitors a unique insight into the life of WASP pilots. Stop by and see Rosa’s album in her WASP in the Spotlight exhibit. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Andrea McGilvray for generously donating Rosa Lea’s collection to the National WASP WWII Museum.

CELEBRATING THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE PATRIOTIC MERCHANDISE

Discover Summer Essentials at our Store!

This July, shop our red, white, and blue merchandise. From cool tumblers and comfy WASP-themed shirts for outdoor fun, to books and puzzles for indoor relaxation, we’ve got you covered.

Visit our store or browse online to shop from anywhere! Don’t forget to check our website monthly for features items and special sales. Make this summer memorable with our curated collection of essentials!

VISIT WASPMUSEUM.ORG TO PURCHASE MERCHANDISE

SONGS OF THE NINETY-NINES
NEW BLOG POST FROM JULIA LAURIA-BLUM

“In the air, everywhere, it’s the song of the Ninety-Nines. Wings in Flight, Day and Night with the Song of the Ninety-Nines, On the line, fliers fine, ships and spirit tuned in rhyme. Keep that formation over the nation with the song of the Ninety-Nines.”

VISIT WASPMUSEUM.ORG TO READ THIS ARTICLE
ASP Board of Director Theresa Claiborne retired from United Airlines on May 23rd to the high acclaim of CNN, ABC and countless organizations. 2,225 pilots will retire this year so why does Theresa get such a get an honorable mention? Well, because she is no ordinary pilot.

Theresa is the first Black woman pilot in the history of the United States Air Force, commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1981. She later became the first Black woman to serve as a command pilot and instructor for the Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker during her seven years on active duty in the Military and 13 years in the Reserves.

Yet, Theresa is so much more than a first. As fellow WASP Board member Heidi Pallister says, “She paved her own path in aviation and brings light to others who did the same.”

Theresa is a darn good pilot but she’s an even better friend, mentor, and community member. There are so many things I could say about her but at the end of the day Theresa paints her own picture best. Enjoy her Instagram Post from May 23 and keep some Kleenex handy.

For one last time... This is your Captain speaking...

As we descended into EWR on my final approach, memories of my entire 34-year career floated across the clouds like butterflies. I saw the smiles of millions of happy passengers, thousands of loving reunions, hundreds of safe landings, and the face of my favorite passenger I’ve ever flown with—the one who sacrificed so much for me to get to this moment—my Momma.

A close friend and retired pilot advised me to soak it all in and take things slow. Calm as Captains do, my heart began to swell as I saw the water cannon salute and held back what felt like water cannons behind my eyes. Then the wheels kissed the ground—a perfect landing.

Now everyone’s asking me, “What’s next?” And I tell them, “This is only just the beginning of what I believe is the best chapter of my life.”

I plan to spend my days inspiring young people to follow their dreams by turning them into goals, shattering glass ceilings, and defying all odds. I’ll be calling in my friends from all around the world to share their experiences to empower the next generation of trailblazers who are destined for greatness.

If they can see it, they can be it.

Today, I may be retired from flying airplanes at United Airlines, but in the words of one of the G.O.A.T.s (Greatest of All Time), Kobe Bryant, “Job’s not finished.”

It’s been a pleasure to be your Captain and an absolute honor to fly the friendly skies.

Conratulations Theresa on your retirement!
WELCOMING NEW FACES
THE WASP MUSEUM INTRODUCES
NEW STAFF MEMBERS

The Museum is excited to announce the newest additions to the WASP team. We’re excited for you to get to know these new faces!

Allison Marlett, Retail Manager

My name is Allison Marlett, and I am the new Retail Manager at the National WASP WWII Museum in Sweetwater, Texas. I was born and raised here, and I’ve cherished watching this museum evolve as I grew up. After graduating from Sweetwater High School, I proudly joined the Fightin’ Texas Aggie Class of 2023 at Texas A&M University. I worked hard and was fortunate to graduate a year early in 2022 (whoop!). This led me to spend two years in Orlando, Florida. During that time, I worked at Walt Disney World as a Slide Operator and Merchandise Host, eventually earning a promotion to Merchandise Coordinator. It was an invaluable experience, and I am thrilled to bring some of that magic back home to Texas and the WASP Museum!

Connor Aycock, Archivist

My name is Connor Aycock, I was born and raised in the small town of Sedgwick, Kansas. While many kids saved all for studying for school and homework, I often studied history on my own, for no other reason than to grow my knowledge. In truth, it would be fair to say that history is a part of my family. My maternal grandfather was a veteran of World War II, and my paternal grandfather was a Korean War veteran. I never knew my maternal grandfather, as he died long before I was born, but I spent a lot of time with my paternal grandfather, and I was always fascinated by the stories he would tell. Through my education, history was always my best subject, but I would be lying if I was always certain it would be my lifelong career. In truth, the event that solidified my career path did not come until college. Throughout high school and college, I had always floated the idea of working at a museum due to my love of history, but a specific position to strive for was still an enigma. That changed when I took a summer internship at the Museum of World Treasures in downtown Wichita, working in the archives, cataloging artifacts, and occasionally moving exhibits in and out of storage. Once I obtained my bachelor’s degree in history from Fort Hays State University, I began a long and arduous search for a job, eventually finding my way to the National WASP Museum. As an archivist, my favorite part of the job is undoubtably working with the various artifacts in the museum’s collection. Being a historian is a great responsibility, and it is one that I will bear for the sake of generations to come.

Welcome, Allison & Connor!

UPCOMING EVENTS

7/22 | EAA AirVenture Airshow | Oshkosh, WI
9/7 - 9/8 | Midland Airsho | Midland, TX
10/12 | Corsicana Air Show | Corsicana, TX
11/15 - 11/17 | Warbirds Over South Texas | Rockport, TX
12/7 | Jolly Jamboree featuring Santa
4/25 - 4/26 | Save the date for the WASP Homecoming Celebration & Fly-In

SCAN ME
WITH YOUR PHONE’S CAMERA TO ACCESS MORE INFORMATION ON UPCOMING EVENTS OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.WASPMUSEUM.ORG
Thank you to all our outstanding attendees, speakers, sponsors, volunteers, photographers, and organizers for making the WASP Homecoming Celebration and Airshow a phenomenal event. Through insightful panels and engaging speakers, we shared knowledge, inspiration, and unforgettable moments together. Your passion, expertise, and enthusiasm truly made this weekend an unforgettable experience. We hope you enjoy the following pictorial memories. If you were unable to attend (or maybe just not feeling it) we hope you find inspiration (and good old fashioned jealousy) and join us next year when we celebrate the WASP Museum’s 20th anniversary. If you missed our Homecoming recap in May’s digital newsletter, please check it out here:

WWW.WASPMUSEUM.ORG/HOMECOMING

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

If you are passionate about the history of the National WASP WWII Museum and want to stay up-to-date with all the latest news and events, then we have got you covered. Our official Avenger News exclusive newsletter is the perfect way to keep yourself informed. By subscribing, you will receive marketing emails that will provide you with all the latest information, including exclusive content, extended digital bi-annual newsletters, featured artifacts, upcoming events, and much more.

As our online audience is important to us, we have launched this newsletter tailored specifically to your interests. At the beginning of each month, you will receive fresh and exciting articles and stories from our featured blog written by historians, authors, legacy pilots, WASP family members, and more. We will also share important updates, and also include information on living WASP birthdays, WASP family visits to the museum, and any other museum-related news.

To subscribe, simply visit www.waspmuseum.org or scan the QR code for quick access to our website.
MORE PHOTOS ARE AVAILABLE TO VIEW ON OUR ONLINE GALLERY

VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITE TO VIEW EVENT PHOTOS AND FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHERS

WWW.WASPMUSEUM.ORG/HOMECOMING
We have some exciting news for you about the WASP Recipe & Story Book... we’re getting closer to launch! Coming April 2025.

As we navigate nailing down the technical details and design of this exclusive book, we invite you to consider submitting content one last time. The following WASP and Avenger Field staff will be represented in the book. If any of the families of the WASP listed (or any not listed) would like to send in any additional content, please do! All submissions for the book will be due by Saturday, August 31, 2024. Send content via email to Jordan at jordan@waspmuseum.org.

Once we have a finalized design and chosen printer for production, we will have more information to give on pre-order opportunities prior to the WASP Homecoming Celebration where this book will be available in the National WASP WWII Museum gift shop.

AVENGER FIELD STAFF
PASTRY CHEF LENA SPENCER
MECHANIC JESSIE LOU MONROE MCREYNOLDS
INSTRUCTOR JD ALEXANDER
INSTRUCTOR RIGDON EDWARDS
INSTRUCTOR WILLIAM DICKENSHEETS
WASP
ADELINE WOLAK ELLISON
ANABEL L. (EARP) RUSO
AUDREY TARDY BRADY
BERNICE “BEE” FALK HAYDU
BERYL OWENS PASCHICH
BETTY JO STREFF REED
CARYL JONES STORTZ
CATHERINE “CAPPY” VAIL BRIDGE
DOLORES MEURER (REED)
DORA DOUGHERTY STROTHERS
DORI MARLAN
DOUGLAS BELLASSAI COURTNEY
ESTHER MAY MIGHT
EULA ELIZABETH “BETTY” MORTON BROWN
FAITH “Bucky” Buchner Richards
FLORA BELLE (SMITH) REECE
FLORENCE J. NIEMIC MARSTON
FLORENE MILLER WATSON
FRANCES R. SARGENT
GERALDINE “JERRY” HARDMAN JORDAN
GERTRUDE “TOBY” TOMPSON
GWENDOLYN C. SCALES
Hazel pierce brooks MCKAUGHAN
INA BARKLEY PETSCH
IRENE M. RAVEN ROBERTSON
JEAN “JEEP” HARMAN
JEAN F. HIXSON
JEAN T. MOREO MCRREERY
JOCELYN MOORE EVERNHAM
JOY WADDINGTON
KATHERINE JOY MERRITT-MOORE
KATHRYN “KAY” STARK GUNDERSON
LENI LEOTI “DEDIE” DEATON
LETA JANE BROWNFIELD
LETA JANE BROWNFIELD
LILLIAN GLEZEN WRAY
LOUISE GRACE PECK BAUGHMAN
LUCILE DOLL WISE
LOUISE GRACE PECK BAUGHMAN
MADELYN M. TAYLOR EGGLINGTON
MARIA BELLASSAI COURTNEY
MARGARET “PEGGY” HELBURN KITCHER
MARGARET E. NEYMAN MARTIN
MARGERY MOORE HOLBEN
MARIAN G. MANN
MARIE BARRETT MARSH
MARIE MOUNTAIN CLARK
MARIAN FOSTER STEEGMAN
MARY ANN MARTIN “MARTY” WYALL
MARY EDITH ENGLE
MARY LOUIS “BETTY” CAVETT DEBENKNE
MARY LOUISE PRINE
MARY RUTH RANCE
MARYLYN MYERS
MILDRED JANE BAESSLER DOYLE
MURIEL LINDSTROM SEGALL
NADINE RAMSEY
NELL STEVENSON BRIGHT
PATRICIA HANLEY SHIELDS NEWLON
RITA EDNA MURPHY
ROSA LEE DICKERSON
RUTH REYNOLDS FRANKLINC
RUTH THOMPSON UNDERWOOD FLOREY
SARA (PAYNE) HAYDEN
SHIRLEY J. CHASE KRUZE
SOLANGE D’HOOGHE
STARLEY MAE GRONA
SUZANNE LEONNE HIGGINS
The WASP Recipe & Story Book

EVOLUTION OF A WOMAN AVENGER

May 14, 1942: Avenger Field Privateers
July 14, 1942: Avenger Field Privateers
July 14, 1942: Waco WASP Base

Frances Rohrer Sargent
43-W-4

“Big kids had a supercar for a grandmother.”

Frances’s Pineapple Upside Down Cake

INGREDIENTS

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Grease a 9-inch round cake pan with flour form
3. Line with aluminum foil and grease, set aside.
4. Pour equal amounts of cake mix and pineapple sauce in the cake pan. Dot yellow cake mix with pineapple sauce.
5. Bake 350° F for 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
6. Cool 10 minutes before removing cake from pan.
7. Invert onto serving plate.

Frances Rohrer Sargent 43-W-4

* Ingredients may vary due to adaption.
*

Preserving the History Promoting the Legacy Protecting the Airfield
A WASP IN THE SPOTLIGHT
EXHIBIT FEATURING

ROSA LEA FULLWOOD MEAK 43-W-4
SOLANGE D’HOOGHE 43-W-5
DORI MARLAND MARTIN 43-W-8
MARYLYN MYERS PEYTON 44-W-5
BETTY JO STREFF REED 44-W-7
SUZETTE VANDAELL DOUGLAS 44-W-10

APRIL 26, 2024 - APRIL 25, 2025

On Friday, April 26, 2024, at the Homecoming Celebration & Air Show, the WASP Museum unveiled its new collection of special WASP in the Spotlight exhibits for the 2024-25 year. Each story is unique and includes videos, artifacts, photos, and memorabilia. This year’s featured item is a video recording of class 44-10 graduation with Jacqueline Cochran’s and Gen Hap Arnold’s speeches. Much like a patchwork quilt, the individual stories of the WASP, pieced together, create the beautiful larger narrative of the WASP program. This quilt represents the most complete account of these mighty pilots and their WASP program.

During Friday’s brunch, the WASP Family panel featured three WASP in The Spotlight families, each with a personal connection to their mother’s spirits, adventures, and accomplishments. They represented WASP Betty Jo Streff Reed 44-7, Jean Downey Harman 44-9, and Dorothy Smith Lucas 44-7, bringing their stories to life.

To read their stories, visit the website page listed below and please come to the Museum to see their exhibits before April 2025.

To find out more about upcoming events, please visit www.waspmuseum.org/events.

www.waspmuseum.org/wasp-in-the-spotlight

Many of you have inquired about your WASP becoming a Spotlight honoree. Please know while our aim is to spotlight all the WASP either physically and/or digitally, the archive needs information to tell their stories.

An archive is the lifeblood of any museum. It provides primary sources of information through newspapers clippings, official documents, photographs, and textiles that are needed to tell historically accurate, fascinating, and engaging stories. Families can donate artifacts to the Museum with confidence. The National WASP WWII Museum Archive, the only organization solely dedicated to the WASP, adheres to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Archival Storage Standards in our vault’s construction and in the archival materials used for preservation.

Please contact Ann Haub at ann@waspmuseum.org to donate artifacts, request research assistance, or to tour the archive.
Frederick is a graduate of Winona State University – the Alma Mater of WASP Ethel Meyer Finley. Several years ago he wrote a feature article about Ethel Meyer for the Winona Atate alumni magazine. And until retiring to Houston, Minnesota, Beseler lived in La Crosse, Wisconsin -- hometown of WASP Marybelle Ahlstrom Smith.

"Folks ask me why I enjoy telling the WASP story. Well, it was my late mother who gave me the love of ying from an early age. Later, I was privileged to take her ying in a Piper Super Cub -- a flight she thoroughly enjoyed. And, my flight instructor was a woman.

"It was the women in my life who gave me the gift of flight. Telling the WASP story is one way I can give back!"

As part of his WASP Powerpoint presentation, Beseler recruits a volunteer to dress in a facsimile WASP uniform. He has given talks about the WASP to various school classes, libraries, historical societies, and museums, including the Richard I. Bong World War 2 Museum in Superior, Wisconsin. Last summer he spoke to nearly 100 women at the Woman’s Club of Minneapolis.

Beseler enjoys sharing the WASP history. “Students really enjoy hearing the story of the WASP -- especially when one of their classmates puts on the flying gear.” As a thank you, Beseler gives student volunteer a WASP Fifi pin and WASP pen from the WASP museum.

He is looking for a vintage seat pack parachute and harness to complete the uniform. His presentation covers the WASP origins, training, duties and legacy that includes the award of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Beseler grew up in Trempealeau, Wisconsin, hometown of WASP Ailsa Robinson Connally Simonsen, Class 44-W-10. "I never met Ailsa, but my parents said that in later years when she would come home to visit her parents, she’d tear around town in a little green Porsche sports car."

Frederick is a graduate of Winona State University – the Alma Mater of WASP Ethel Meyer Finley. Several years ago he wrote a feature article about Ethel Meyer for the Winona Atate alumni magazine. And until retiring to Houston, Minnesota, Beseler lived in La Crosse, Wisconsin -- hometown of WASP Marybelle Ahlstrom Smith.

"Folks ask me why I enjoy telling the WASP story. Well, it was my late mother who gave me the love of flying from an early age. Later, I was privileged to take her flying in a Piper Super Cub -- a flight she thoroughly enjoyed. And, my flight instructor was a woman.

"It was the women in my life who gave me the gift of flight. Telling the WASP story is one way I can give back!"

As part of his WASP Powerpoint presentation, Beseler recruits a volunteer to dress in a facsimile WASP uniform. He has given talks about the WASP to various school classes, libraries, historical societies, and museums, including the Richard I. Bong World War 2 Museum in Superior, Wisconsin. Last summer he spoke to nearly 100 women at the Woman’s Club of Minneapolis.

Beseler enjoys sharing the WASP history. “Students really enjoy hearing the story of the WASP -- especially when one of their classmates puts on the flying gear.” As a thank you, Beseler gives student volunteer a WASP Fifi pin and WASP pen from the WASP museum.

He is looking for a vintage seat pack parachute and harness to complete the uniform. His presentation covers the WASP origins, training, duties and legacy that includes the award of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Beseler grew up in Trempealeau, Wisconsin, hometown of WASP Ailsa Robinson Connally Simonsen, Class 44-W-10. "I never met Ailsa, but my parents said that in later years when she would come home to visit her parents, she’d tear around town in a little green Porsche sports car."

"Folks ask me why I enjoy telling the WASP story. Well, it was my late mother who gave me the love of flying from an early age. Later, I was privileged to take her flying in a Piper Super Cub -- a flight she thoroughly enjoyed. And, my flight instructor was a woman.

"It was the women in my life who gave me the gift of flight. Telling the WASP story is one way I can give back!"

As part of his WASP Powerpoint presentation, Beseler recruits a volunteer to dress in a facsimile WASP uniform. He has given talks about the WASP to various school classes, libraries, historical societies, and museums, including the Richard I. Bong World War 2 Museum in Superior, Wisconsin. Last summer he spoke to nearly 100 women at the Woman’s Club of Minneapolis.

Beseler enjoys sharing the WASP history. “Students really enjoy hearing the story of the WASP -- especially when one of their classmates puts on the flying gear.” As a thank you, Beseler gives student volunteer a WASP Fifi pin and WASP pen from the WASP museum.

He is looking for a vintage seat pack parachute and harness to complete the uniform. His presentation covers the WASP origins, training, duties and legacy that includes the award of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Beseler grew up in Trempealeau, Wisconsin, hometown of WASP Ailsa Robinson Connally Simonsen, Class 44-W-10. "I never met Ailsa, but my parents said that in later years when she would come home to visit her parents, she’d tear around town in a little green Porsche sports car."

"Folks ask me why I enjoy telling the WASP story. Well, it was my late mother who gave me the love of flying from an early age. Later, I was privileged to take her flying in a Piper Super Cub -- a flight she thoroughly enjoyed. And, my flight instructor was a woman.

"It was the women in my life who gave me the gift of flight. Telling the WASP story is one way I can give back!"

As part of his WASP Powerpoint presentation, Beseler recruits a volunteer to dress in a facsimile WASP uniform. He has given talks about the WASP to various school classes, libraries, historical societies, and museums, including the Richard I. Bong World War 2 Museum in Superior, Wisconsin. Last summer he spoke to nearly 100 women at the Woman’s Club of Minneapolis.

Beseler enjoys sharing the WASP history. “Students really enjoy hearing the story of the WASP -- especially when one of their classmates puts on the flying gear.” As a thank you, Beseler gives student volunteer a WASP Fifi pin and WASP pen from the WASP museum.

He is looking for a vintage seat pack parachute and harness to complete the uniform. His presentation covers the WASP origins, training, duties and legacy that includes the award of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Beseler grew up in Trempealeau, Wisconsin, hometown of WASP Ailsa Robinson Connally Simonsen, Class 44-W-10. "I never met Ailsa, but my parents said that in later years when she would come home to visit her parents, she’d tear around town in a little green Porsche sports car."

"Folks ask me why I enjoy telling the WASP story. Well, it was my late mother who gave me the love of flying from an early age. Later, I was privileged to take her flying in a Piper Super Cub -- a flight she thoroughly enjoyed. And, my flight instructor was a woman.

"It was the women in my life who gave me the gift of flight. Telling the WASP story is one way I can give back!"
Blue Skies and Tailwinds

ASP Shirley June Chase Kruse was born June 22, 1922, to William John Chase and Helen Webber Chase. Shirley lived her young life in New York and New Jersey with her siblings Helen, Margaret, William (Bill), and Gertrude (Gert), along with many aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends nearby.

She is pre-deceased by her first husband Chester Egler and her second husband Lawrence Kruse.

Family summers the siblings escaped the heat of New York to experience country life with their grandmothers and great aunts in Laconia and Wentworth, New Hampshire, and Rosendale, New York.

A favorite family recollection is that while living in New York City in the late 1920’s early 1930s, Shirley, Gert and Bill formed a vaudeville group that performed in local theaters and also on the Hudson River Dayliner, with a full orchestra. They always won the big talent prize, which was an important contributor to the family income during lean years. Shirley and Gert continued their singing together into their elder years.

Shirley was a pilot with the WASP, US Air Force, from 1944-1946. It was her life’s passion to educate others about the efforts of these valiant, ground-breaking women. She was a spokesman and frequent interviewee for anything WASP. Her legacy leaves many gifts to the WASP Museum in Sweetwater, Texas and the Missiles and More Museum in Topsail Beach, NC.

Shirley was strong-willed at times, but she also had an enormous heart and a wonderful sense of adventure. She was generous, loyal, and brave. She loved her family above all else (reprimanding them when necessary!). She was an open-minded world traveler, always preferring the best hotels and the best hotel bar in town and enjoying 12-year scotch. She traveled the world many times over, including family members and making memories with them.

Her wish upon death was for her “clan” to raise a glass and declare, “No tears here, Shirley was a woman who lived her life. She was a good old broad!”. She will be remembered for all the heart she shared with her friends and family.

Shirley was survived by her family who will miss her forever- daughters, Barbara Paul-Holmes of Pompano Beach, Florida, and Katherine Arnott-Maheu and Wendy Van Kleeck, both of Wilmington, North Carolina, 10 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

“Fly High Shirley”

Source: https://portcitydaily.com/obits/2024/02/12/shirley-june-kruse-101/

ASP Alyce Stevens Rohrer, a fearless pioneer in aviation during World War II, touched down peacefully on February 1st, 2024, at the age of 101. Known for her significant achievements in the air as well as on the page, she lived a life of courage, dedication, and quiet strength, inspiring generations of women to challenge boundaries and reach for the sky. Hers was a life that soared beyond imaginable heights, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of generations and the fabric of history.

“I knew I wanted more,” Alyce said in an interview for Ms. Magazine. “I wanted freedom. As a little girl I would walk the fields and watch a plane fly over. The first time I saw one I lit up. I knew I would be a pilot one day, and no one could stop me.”

Alyce Stevens met her husband James Rohrer on the airfield. He was a flight instructor who worked alongside her at Avenger Field. They were married after the war and started a family in Pasadena, California. Alyce was often seen at speaking events, book readings, and ceremonies around the nation accompanied by her daughter, Carol Ann Benson. Her son, Glenn Rohrer of Priest River, Idaho, had the privilege of taking his mother on her last private flight, in his own C-182 aircraft, a fitting farewell on the way home from a Idaho Bird Museum’s celebration of WASPs event in 2010.

She taught herself how to play the organ and piano. The art that comforted her most, however, was her passion to write. Her first published book, The True Believers, outlined the life and days in the Mormon church. It won her national acclaim. She continued to write over five more books, eventually working up the courage to write about her time as a WASP.

Though grief mutes our voices, a song of celebration rises for a life that soared against the wind. Alyce Rohrer, whose final landing came peacefully, leaves behind a story that takes flight anew, inspiring generations to chase their dreams, defy expectations, and pen their own remarkable chapters in the grand narrative of life.

Her spirit, like her legacy, will forever remain airborne in the hearts and accomplishments of all women who fly, and all of us who dare to dream just a little more than what we are told is possible.

Source: https://obituaries.forestlawn.com/obituaries/alyce-rohrer

Source: https://portcitydaily.com/obits/2024/02/12/shirley-june-kruse-101/
Celebrating 20 Years of the National WASP WWII Museum

APRIL 25 - 26, 2025

WASP Homecoming
Celebration & Fly-In

Save the Date

THANK YOU 2024 SPONSORS!

AIRSHOW BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

TexasWest
Dyess Air Force Base

P-40 WARHAWK BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Georgia-Pacific

CADET ZONE BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Community Foundation of Abilene

WWW.WASPMUSEUM.ORG/HOMECOMING