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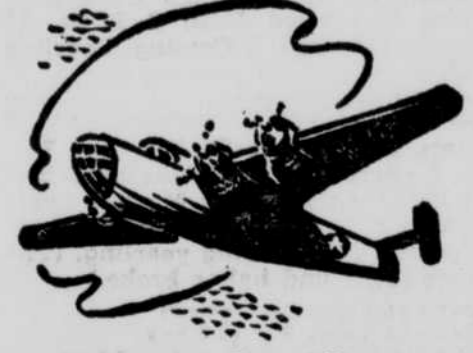
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American Women Pilots Helped Deliver Planes Which Enabled Red Armies to Launch Offensive That May Have Been Turning Point of the War

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON Released by Western Newspaper Union.

THIS is a story of the great 1944 summer offensive of the Red army which historians of the future may write down as the turning point of the war. It is the little-known story of the contribution of a small group of American women to the success of that drive, of the part they played in making it possible for the determined Russians, who had stopped the Nazi hordes at the gates of Moscow and Stalingrad, to push them back across the plains of White Russia and the mud of Poland to the very German border itself.

It is the story of the civilian women ferrying pilots of the Air Transport Command's division, a skilled, determined and courageous little group from among the members of the Women's Air Force Service pilots, popularly known as WASPs.

This story begins just about a year ago. The "clouds of planes" which President Roosevelt had promised at the beginning of the war (and at which our enemies had scoffed) were rolling from American production lines. Lend-Lease was making these planes, especially the fighter planes, available to our allies, the Russians. But it's a "long, long trail" from the factories of America to the Eastern front—it winds from the Bell Aircraft factory in Niagara Falls, N. Y., across the fertile Mississippi valley, the great plains of the West, the Rocky mountains, the wilds of Canada and Alaska, the steppes of Siberia and the Ural mountains to Moscow, and then the Eastern fighting front.

How to get these fighter planes to the Russian front—and especially to deliver them in time for the great Russian offensive—that was the question. To fly them there seemed to be the logical way, but fighters, with their limited range, must avoid long overwater flights. An overland route was needed. That need had been foreseen long before and the "trail," previously mentioned, had already been established by the Air Transport Command's ferrying division and its Alaskan division.

The War department accorded No. 1 priority to the movement of American planes to the Russian armies and the problem of getting them there was assigned to the ATC ferrying division, commanded by Brig. Gen. Bob E. Nowland, to its pilots and its groups. As a matter of fact, planes of many types were moved to the fighting fronts, taken there by men pilots, both American and Russian. But this story deals only with the fighter planes and the Women's Air Force Service pilots.

The ferrying division's third ferrying group, based at Romulus, Mich., was assigned the mission of ferrying the deadly, fast Airacobra from the Bell factory in Niagara Falls to Great Falls, Mont., where the Seventh Ferrying group took over for the delivery to the Russians at Fairbanks and at Nome.



Barbara Donahue, commanding officer of the WASP squadron of the Third Ferrying Group, based at Romulus field, Mich., poses beside one of the nine Bell Airacobras which she delivered over the "long, long trail" from Niagara Falls, N. Y., to Great Falls, Mont.

The Old Sergeant Didn't Want to Be a 'Petticoat Herder'

The sergeant was "Old Army." Hash marks indicating nearly 30 years of service adorned his left sleeve, topped by the stripes of a master sergeant. So, you can imagine his reaction when, on reporting as crew chief on an army flying boat, he found a woman civilian pilot of the Ferrying Division Air Transport Command at the controls, another in the copilot's seat. "After 30 years in the Army I herd



BRIG. GEN. BOB E. NOWLAND

Then, it became a question of manpower, of availability of pilots to keep pace with the output of the production lines. To meet this emergency, the ferrying division decided to utilize the services of its qualified and trained civilian women ferrying pilots on the domestic section of the "long, long trail."

Each male pilot released from the 1,800-mile trip from Niagara Falls to Great Falls simply meant one more male pilot for the long, dangerous hop from Great Falls to Nome. These women hadn't been flying fighter planes . . . light ships had been their assignments in the past . . . but they had long experience, hours in the air and, with a short period of transition training, they were ready for the task.

It wasn't a glamorous one. The ferry pilot of the Army's Air Transport Command is a hard-working individual who lives out of his B-4 bag, spends long stretches of time away from his home base, flies long hours and encounters little of the glamour, the heroics and the recognition that come to the combat pilot.

These Women's Air Force Service pilots were going to share that lot with the men. So their story can't be one of glamour either. It's merely the record of a job well done. By comparison with the number of male pilots engaged in the operation, the WASPs were a small group. But by comparison, the job they did equaled the performance of their male partners.

They delivered from Niagara to Great Falls sufficient planes to completely arm a half dozen Russian squadrons, and they did such a workmanlike job that their loss ratio compares favorably with that of the men. In fact, only three Airacobras leaving Niagara with a WASP at the controls failed to reach Great Falls.

The normal flying time from Niagara to Great Falls is approximately nine hours, but the lapsed time on the average delivery probably is three times that great, considering that the ferrying division demands almost perfect weather conditions for the operation of fighter aircraft, and that winter through Minnesota, the Dakotas and Montana and in the Great Lakes region of the Middle West often is far below the minimum required.

And when a delivery is completed from Niagara Falls to Great Falls, the pilot must return to the Third Ferrying Group, a 14-hour ride on the special crewliners provided by the military air transport section of the ferrying division for just that purpose.

Yet, despite the ruggedness of the trip, WASPs of the Third Ferrying group delivered Russia-bound fighters from Niagara to Great Falls in a single day, delivered three planes in ten days, which is a feat to equal the best performances of their male coworkers. Barbara Donahue, commanding officer of the Third Ferrying group, WASP detachment at Romulus, paced the delivery of Russia-bound fighters for her detachment, with nine to her credit, while WASP Mary C. Johnson of the Third group ranked second in the list of individual achievement with seven as her score.

WASP Ellen Grey is one of the few pilots who can boast of a one-day delivery from Niagara to Great Falls, a flight accomplished in eight hours and 18 minutes of actual time in the air, and an elapsed time of approximately 11 hours. Consider that five hours in the air is considered a day's work by the average fighter pilot and that the usual de-

livery from Niagara to Great Falls is considered a two or three-day job, and you'll realize that Miss Grey . . . to say the least . . . was working "overtime." Three of the seven deliveries credited to WASP Mary C. Johnson were made over a 12-day period—a record of which any pilot, man or woman, may well be proud when one considers the sheer physical exertion involved.

But while WASP Grey's feat of making a one-day delivery and WASP Johnson's feat of three deliveries in 12 days are outstanding examples of WASP performance, they are not really unusual. The records of the Third Ferrying group WASP detachment show that all of these women pilots are hard-working and conscientious. There's Betty Archibald and Pat Dickerson with records of two deliveries in eight days. There are Grace Burge and Virginia Claire with two deliveries each in 10 days. And the chances are that it was weather which kept some of these girls from equaling the record of WASP Johnson.

When the movement started, these women ferry pilots were not trusted as fly-alones on the "long, long trail." They were assigned as wingmen to experienced male pilots familiar with the route. But as they gained experience through hard work they were graduated to the fly alone class, and now they take their turns flying alone, still rushing planes to the Russians.

But the "long, long trail" is not the only place in which the civilian women pilots of the Air Transport Command's ferrying division have proved their worth in the two years since Mrs. Nancy Harkness Love formed the first women's ferrying



Mrs. Lenore Louise McElroy, operations officer of the WASP squadron of the Third Ferrying Group at Romulus field, Mich. WASP McElroy recently made aviation history when she delivered a big Consolidated "Catalina" flying boat (designated by the Navy as PBYs and by the Army as OA-10s) at one of the aviation fields in this country. It was the first time one of these big ships has ever been flown by a woman pilot. Since then she has flown more than 80 hours in this type of ship, adding the time to her already impressive total of more than 3,000 pilot hours.

squadron at the 2nd Ferrying Group base, Wilmington, Del., on September 10, 1942.

Since that date women pilots assigned to the Ferrying Division have flown more than 7,500,000 miles ferrying planes from factories to destinations within the United States. Originally assigned only to light liaison and training type planes, they now are qualified to fly 68 different types of ships, ranging from heavy four-engine bombers down.

Of their number, 16 per cent are qualified to fly class four planes such as the Billy Mitchell and Marauder medium bombers, and 98 per cent have made deliveries in class three planes such as twin-engine transports. But, in the ferrying division, emphasis is placed on the ferrying of lighter type planes and fighter planes, and it is significant to note that 68 per cent of the women pilots in this division are now qualified fighter pilots, making regular deliveries of Airacobras, Mustangs, Thunderbolts and Warhawks.

Of even greater significance is the fact that 100 per cent of these pilots hold army instrument ratings and are qualified to make cross country flight under weather conditions which require the use of instruments.

Democracy Still at Work

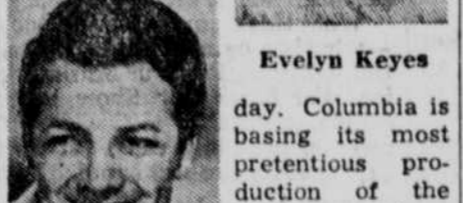
Where else could it happen but in America? Only a few short years ago I was talking like a mother to a tall handsome youngster, scared out of his wits about playing a scene in "Children of Divorce." Yet the other night that youngster, Gary Cooper, bid \$100,000 in war bonds for one of my silly hats, and quipped: "I just wanted to get the darned thing off the market." That same kid is not only starring in but producing his own picture. And in many ways he's still the shy, reticent lad.

Hedda Hopper: Looking at HOLLYWOOD

NO MATTER how grown-up we look or are, we all remain kids at heart. Deep down the child in people remains alive, even though on the outside they grow old and gray. That's the reason folks never lose their taste for fairy tales.

In wartime we particularly want to believe goodness always triumphs, that Prince Charming invariably slays the ogre and rescues the Princess Beautiful.

The fairy tale in films has never been more popular than it is to-



Evelyn Keyes

day, Columbia is basing its most pretentious production of the year on "A Thousand and One Nights," a technical fantasy of old Baghdad. They've taken the Aladdin and his lamp story and are giving it a sophisticated twist, with Cornel Wilde playing Aladdin as a crooner, the Frankie Boy of an earlier age, Evelyn Keyes as a jive-mad jinniyeh.

Fantasy de Luxe

Director Alfred E. Green assures me that the picture will have all the fairy tale fixings—magic carpets, giants, a subterranean river with crocodiles which change into lotus flowers just in the nick o' time, harem beauties by the dozen, and an under-water ballet that promises to make the old Annette Kellermann subsea movies made during the first World War look like flotsam and jetsam.

Even before World War I, fairy tales were popular on the screen. As early as the turn of the century Georges Melies, in France, discovered that movies could show magic in a way the stage never could manage.

It wasn't long before America showed feature length fairy tales and fantasies. One of the earliest was Mary Pickford in "Cinderella." Owen Moore, Mary's husband at the time, played the prince, and while the "transformation" scenes were crude beside those in "A Thousand and One Nights," they made people gasp when the pumpkin became a coach and Mary's rags turned into royal glad rags before their eyes.

Lavish in Old Days, Too

It was Annette Kellermann, one-time champion swimmer, who made the biggest splash of that period in an elaborate fantasy called "Nephtune's Daughter" and another, "A Daughter of the Gods." Annette brought the one-piece bathing suit to fame, and gals have never discarded it since. These films were made on location in the Bahamas and Cuba under Herbert Brenon.

William Fox starred the Fox Kiddies in elaborate versions of fairy tales, with youngsters playing both junior and adult parts. Remember blonde Virginia Lee Corbin and Frances Carpenter in "Babes in the Wood" and "Jack and the Beanstalk"? Those movies cost fortunes.

Doug Fairbanks knew the dream of youth better than any one else. In "Robin Hood," "The Thief of Bagdad," and "The Black Pirate," he gave us some of the best fairy tales the screen has had.

Walt Disney, bless him, really brought the fairy tale to full flower with his magic brush. "Snow White," which is now revived, is a lovely thing for kids of all ages. And now, thanks to a special campaign on my part, it will be revived each Christmas.

Try, Try Again

"Alice in Wonderland" came along, too, just at the time the screen was learning to talk. Paramount made the mistake of covering such famous faces as those of Gary Cooper and W. C. Fields with masks.

Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" was given a spectacular production by the late Max Reinhardt.

Judy Garland played Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz," based on the Baum books, and you certainly haven't forgotten her singing "Over the Rainbow."

Yes, there's no end to fairy tales, and we're all happier because of them. It's good to be able to adopt the faith and eyes of a child on occasion and sail through a thousand and one nights of romance and adventure on a magic carpet.

ASK ME ANOTHER? A General Quiz The Questions

- 1. Why was the son of Edward III of England called the "Black Prince"?
2. What U. S. President was a tailor by profession?
3. What does "begging the question" mean?
4. What is the oldest royal family in the world?
5. Is the butterfly a dainty eater?
6. What is a peccadillo?
7. What silent and beautiful bird is supposed to burst into song just before its death?
8. What is a nounce?
9. Who was known as "The Sage of Concord"?
10. What does the "right of angary" mean?

The Answers

- 1. Because of the color of his armor.
2. President Johnson.
3. The taking for granted of the point to be proved.
4. The Japanese, dating from 660 B. C.
5. No; it consumes the equal of half of its weight each day.
6. A slight offense.
7. The swan.
8. A shade of difference; a subtle variation.
9. Ralph Waldo Emerson.
10. The "right of angary," which is both a constitutional and international law, allows any belligerent or neutral nation, either in time of peace or war, to seize foreign ships and materials within its territory, subject to adequate compensation.

Squeeze the Trigger

At Fort Custer, Mich., a soldier is taught to squeeze instead of pull the trigger of his rifle by a contraction that, when he makes this mistake, gives him a resounding whack on the seat of his pants.

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GROVE'S COLD TABLETS

"I'd Have Been a Goner . . ."



STAFF SERGEANT JOHN SCHUSTER, infantryman from Stelton, New Jersey

"Hit the ditch, boys; here come the Jerries. Like the rest of the men I dove for the nearest hedgerow in a Normandy field on the road to St. Lo. The low-flying planes dumped their bombs along the road. Only one missed, and that one hit near me. I was badly wounded by the shell fragments and the next thing I knew I was in an evacuation hospital and an Army nurse was giving me blood plasma. If it hadn't been for that I'd have been a goner. I'm an old hand at plasma for I've had it twenty times. Now they're giving me whole-blood transfusions. There were Army nurses with me all the time and, tired as many of them were, they'd spend their off-duty time with us wounded men, helping to bring us back to where we thought things were really worth fighting for. We need all the nurses we can get. If you can, join the Army Nurse Corps."

ALL Women Can Help!

If you are untrained—take a home nursing or nurse's aide course. If you are a senior cadet nurse—serve your final six months in an Army hospital.

If you are a registered nurse—join the Army Nurse Corps. You may mean the difference between life and death to our wounded men. Visit or write your local Red Cross chapter for full information and application blank. Or communicate with the Surgeon General, U. S. Army, Washington 25, D. C.

NURSES ARE NEEDED NOW!

Please send me information on how to help the U. S. Army Nurse Corps to care for our wounded soldiers. I am a registered nurse. I am a senior cadet nurse. I am untrained but want to learn.

Name: Address: City: State: Fill out this coupon and send it to the Surgeon General, U. S. Army, Washington 25, D. C., or to your local Red Cross Recruitment Committee.

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