

MAGNIFICENT WOMEN:

Jacqueline Cochran



11 May 1906 – 9 August 1980

Jacqueline Cochran was an American pilot, a pioneer in the field of American Aviation, best known for her racing abilities, and classed as one of the best of her generation.

Aviation Pioneer

Jacqueline was born in Florida from a modest family, she was a hairdresser and had her own cosmetic business before 1930. She flew first in an aircraft with a friend in the early 30's and learned to fly in a very short time. She got her own commercial pilot license after 2 years and she used this to promote her cosmetic products throughout the US.

She was the only woman to fly in the Bendix Race in 1937 and she worked with Amelia Earhart to open the aviation race to women.

The same year she set a national speed record.

She was called the "Speed Queen" with the following records (amongst other):

- First woman to go "supersonic"
- First woman to break the sound barrier
- First woman to land and take off from an aircraft carrier
- Only woman to be president of Fédération Aéronautique Internationale

She still holds more distance and speed records than any pilot living or dead, male or female.

She enrolled in the US Air Force Reserve in 1948 and has got the rank of Lieutenant Colonel at the end of her career.

Mercury 13

In 1960, Jacqueline was a sponsor of the Mercury 13 program, initial test for women to become astronauts. This program was later cancelled but the debate was open. Introducing women into the space program was a way of competing with the Soviets in the Space Race according to Cochran.

Failing the two main criteria for becoming astronauts (engineering degree and test pilot licence) no women were able to enter the program, which ended in 1962.

Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASP)

Cochran wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt in 1940 to propose a women's division in the Army Air Force. She promoted non-combat missions for women to release more men during World War II. This led to the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron. She travelled to England to find 25 women who qualified for the job and returned to the US with them. They all enrolled in the WAFFS that later merged with the Women's Flying Training Detachment to become the WASP. Cochran was the director and Nancy Love was head of the Ferrying division.

Cochran is one of those women who frequently used her influence to advance the cause of women in aviation

Further information

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacqueline_Cochran

www.jacquelinecochranairshow.org/

<http://waspmuseum.org/>

Charitable Work

Cochran later used her influence in politics to promote the position of women in the society and she used her fame and wealth to do charitable work, especially for people from impoverished backgrounds.