

**HONORING WOMEN AIRFORCE SERVICE PILOTS --
(Extensions of Remarks - November 07, 2003)**

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SPEECH OF
HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES | FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2003

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, As Veterans' day approaches, I want to take the time to recognize the patriotism and sacrifice of a special group of women. I rise today to honor and recognize servicewomen who served as Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) during the Second World War.

The generation that defeated the Nazis has correctly been referred to as the "Greatest Generation." But for many years, the contributions of this select group of young women pilots were overlooked.

As the first women in history trained to fly American military aircraft, the WASP shattered traditional conceptions about women's roles and became pioneers, heroes, and role models for generations of women to come.

They compiled an admirable record, performing essential services that freed males for combat-related service overseas, but their accomplishments did not come without a cost. Thirty-eight members of the WASP made the ultimate sacrifice and lost their lives in the course of their service.

Although these women had answered the call to duty at America's time of greatest need, when the WASP were disbanded on December 20, 1944, they received no GI benefits or military honors.

America tried to forget them, leaving them with only their personal satisfaction that they had done their duty. Congress finally corrected this wrong in 1977 when it formally recognized the service of members of the WASP as active military service, making them eligible for veterans benefits.

As we watch women serving bravely in the War Against Terror, it is safe to say that the future of women in the military seems assured. But it is important to remember that this was not always the case.

It is not an exaggeration that we owe a big part of the freedom we enjoy today to these women pilots. Their love of country and love of flying is something for which we will always be grateful.

At this time I would like to thank the thirty-eight who gave their lives. Let us remember Jane Champlin, Susan Clark, Margie L. Davis, Katherine Dussaq, Marjorie D. Edwards, Elizabeth Erickson. Cornelia Fort, Frances Grimes, Mary Hartson, Mary H. Howson, Edith Keene, Kathryn B. Lawrence, Hazel Ying Lee, Paula Loop, Alice Lovejoy, Lea Ola McDonald, Peggy Martin, Marie N. Michell, Virginia Moffatt, Beverly Moses, Dorothy Nichols, Jeanne L. Norbeck, Margaret Oldenburg, Mabel Rawlinson, Gleanna Roberts, Betty Scott, Margaret J. Seip, Helen J. Severson, Marie Sharon, Evelyn Sharp, Betty P. Stine, Marion Toevs, Gertrude Tompkins, Mary Trebing, Bonnie Jean Welz, Betty T. Wood, and Mary L. Webster.

In these dangerous times, their courage is an inspiration for all Americans. I encourage everyone to learn more about the history of the service of these courageous women.

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