



CELEBRATING WOMEN VETERANS

Each year on November 11, we celebrate Veteran's Day to honor the men – and women – who served our country during wartime. In this column, we focus on women veterans from the Revolutionary War forward. As we did our research for our book: *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*, we

learned about many of these women—some for the first time. We'll share information about Deborah Sampson, Belle Boyd, Annie Oakley, the WASPs, Jackie Cochran, Jeanne Holm, and Wilma Vaught.

In 1782, **Deborah Sampson** disguised herself as a man,

enlisted in the Continental Army, and fought in the Revolutionary War.

Sampson was not the only woman to do this! There were a number of others; unfortunately many of their stories are lost to history. Sampson was wounded more than once; she treated her wounds herself to avoid discovery. However, when she came down with a fever that rendered her unconscious, she was taken to a hospital and her secret was revealed. Honorably discharged in 1873, Sampson later was the subject of a book and went on a speaking tour. She eventually received a pension for her military service. This was an extraordinary moment; pensions had never before been granted to a woman. After her death, in another unusual move, a pension was awarded to her husband based on her military service.



A most unusual “veteran” of the Civil War was **Belle Boyd**. In 1861, when she was seventeen years old, she raised money to arm Confederate soldiers and later, served as a spy. Boyd was able to flirt with Union officers and obtain information that was valuable to the Confederate Army. Her talents included her prowess as a horsewoman; she used her knowledge of the Shenandoah Valley to ferry information and act as a courier. It is also believed that she smuggled in needed supplies, including quinine. She was discovered as a Confederate spy, captured and punished (including prison time) on more than one occasion. Despite being on the losing side, after the war, she wrote and lectured on her exploits.



Although her offer to help President McKinley prior to the Spanish-American War was not accepted, in 1898, famous sharpshooter and star of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, Annie Oakley wrote to the President and offered her services and the services of other women:

Dear Sir, I for one feel confident that your good judgment will carry America safely through without war. But in case of such

an event I am ready to place a company of fifty lady sharpshooters at your disposal. Every one of them will be an American and as they will furnish their own Arms and Ammunition will be little if any expense to the government.

The story of **Annie Oakley**, who began hunting at age nine to put food on the family table, was fictionalized in the play and movie, “Annie Get Your Gun.” Oakley has been inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame.



From the later 1800s, we move to World War II. The efforts of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) were significant during that war. The WASPs, over 1,000 strong, flew American military aircraft in noncombat service missions during the war. They were the first woman trained to fly military aircraft. During the war, they were not treated fairly. They had to pay for their own uniforms and transport. After the war, they did not receive veteran’s benefits. It was not until 2009 that President Obama signed legislation awarding the WASPs the Congressional Gold Medal.

The WASPs were led by **Lieutenant**



Colonel Jacqueline (Jackie) Cochran.

Cochran earned her pilot's license in 1932 and associated with Amelia Earhart, among others. In 1934, she entered her first air race. In June 1941, Cochran became the first woman to pilot a bomber across the Northern Atlantic. In 1942, as Director of Woman's Flying Training for the United States, she welcomed the first class of women pilots at the Houston Airport. In 1943, she was appointed to the General Staff to oversee all operations of the WASPs. The first woman to enter Japan after World War II, in 1953, she became the first woman to break the sound barrier. The first woman inducted into the Aviation Hall of Fame, Cochran has also been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

World War II was also important to Major General Jeanne Holm's military career. After enlisting as a truck driver during the war, Holm attended Officer Candidate School, and then received a commission in the Air Force. From 1965 to 1973, she served as Director of Women in the Air Force, where she worked to achieve equality for women in the armed services. In 1971, she became the first woman in the Air Force to

be promoted to Brigadier General. She achieved another first for women across all of the armed services in 1973 when she was promoted to Major General. Among her many honors, Holm has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

And finally, we'd like to share information regarding **Brigadier General Wilma Vaught**. We frequently use the phrase: "we stand on their shoulders." Clearly Vaught benefitted from the efforts of both Major General Holm and Jackie Cochran. During her twenty-nine year military career, she achieved many firsts, and in turn she paved the way for the women in the armed services today. One of these firsts was the first woman to deploy with a Strategic Air Command bombardment wing during an operational deployment.



Vaught will also be remembered for her significant efforts to establish the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation and raise the funding for a national memorial to honor women's military service. Vaught has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

We celebrate and honor these courageous women, among the more than 850 women profiled in our book

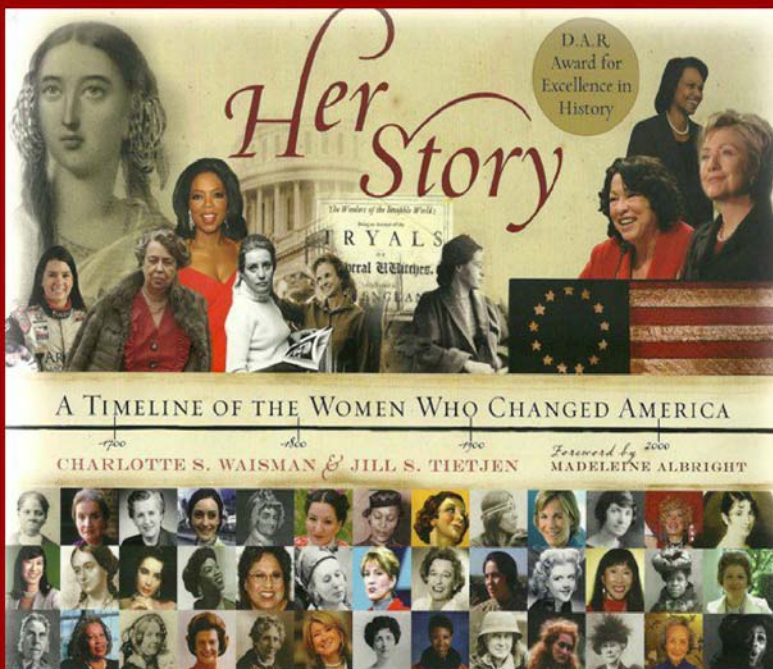


Charlotte S. Waisman, PhD, co-author of *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America* (HarperCollins), is a national champion and advocate for women as a professor and keynote speaker.



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Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America Written by Charlotte S. Waisman and Jill S. Tietjen, with a foreword by Madeleine Albright, *Her Story* is a vivid documentation of the breadth and diversity of American woman's achievements throughout U.S. history since the 1500s. The women featured in *Her Story* range from writers, artists, actors and athletes to doctors, scientists, social and political activists, educators, and inventors, and include women of all backgrounds and philosophies.

"Her Story is like a slideshow of American women's history."

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