

Breaking the Mold

The women who flew for the Army Air Forces in World War 2

On December 8th 1941 the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) had a big problem. With just 152,000 men and 6,700 mostly obsolete aircraft, the nation was now at war on two fronts. Although Japan had a relatively small air force, the German Luftwaffe had over 3.4 million experienced combat troops operating 119,000 advanced aircraft with devastating effectiveness across Europe. For years prior, women pilots had been appealing to fly non-combat missions for the US military but had been flatly rebuffed. American society wasn't ready for women to fly military aircraft until wartime necessity drove the nation to reconsider those norms. 1074 brave and bold women, including 53 from Ohio, broke from societal norms to seize the opportunity to serve their country and prove the fallacy of being the "weaker sex."

Danielle Reese is a member of the 99s, the Commemorative Air Force (Buckeye Wing, WASP Squadron, and Rise Above Squadron), Whirly Girls, Women in Aviation International, NAA, EAA, and AOPA. Danielle holds a private pilot certificate in helicopters and airplanes and operates a variety of aircraft including general aviation airplanes, ultralights, powered parachutes, and a homebuilt plane designed in 1929. Danielle retired from the US Army after 31 years of service and currently works for the Ohio Department of Health as Chief of the Project Management Office.