

My project topic is the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), who served in World War II. I started getting interested in aviation in fourth grade when I did a research project on the United States Air Force. Last year I had an opportunity to complete a History Day project on Charles Lindbergh, and researching him increased my interest. While looking for a topic for History Day this year, I wanted to do something aviation related, but women's empowerment also interested me. When I discovered the WASP, I knew it was a topic I wanted to research

When I started researching, I read websites to get to know the WASP Program and the jobs they did. I then contacted several organizations and museums. I received information from a couple of them, and two of the museums pointed me to a WASP member. I contacted the two WASPs, Elizabeth "Betty" Wall Strohfus, and Florence "Shutsy" Reynolds, and conducted e-mail interviews. They both provided helpful information, and I loved hearing their personal stories and views. I started digging into my research, and visited the Clay County Historical Society's exhibit on people's roles in World War II. I also visited the Moorhead Public Library and got several books on the WASPs and women workers in World War II. After regional History Day I found several other contacts of WASPs and I e-mail interviewed two other women, Bernice "Bee" Falk Haydu and Lucile Wise. I found the Texas Women's University and the Dwight Eisenhower Presidential Library Archives, which contained useful documents of the WASPs, and they greatly helped my researched.

I originally planned to do an exhibit board, like my project last year for History Day. I decided to try a website because I wanted to try something new, and I wanted to add extra multimedia to my project. As I conducted my research and completed my paragraphs, I transferred them into Weebly, adding pictures, quotes, and audio/video. Weebly made it simple to build my website, and I enjoyed being able to choose formats, layouts, and colors. I also continued to add sources into Easybib.

The topic of the WASP program ties to the History Day theme of "Exploration, Encounter, and Exchange." The women in the program explored military aviation, and different jobs they would not normally perform, which led the way for women today to be able to experience the same jobs. Because this was not the traditional role of women, they encountered criticism and discrimination, and although they faced these trials they helped break a barrier for women in the military. The WASPs exchanged ideas of the world amongst each other, and they still have ideas of dedication, commitment, and determination that can be exchanged with generations of women everywhere. The WASPs are important in history because they set examples that women can do anything. Their service inspires me because they followed their dreams, they stepped up to the challenge, and they showed their mental and physical strength by serving their country.