

2009

Woman Veteran of the Year



Elizabeth "Betty Wall" Strohfus

Mrs. Elizabeth Bridget "Betty Wall" Strohfus audaciously served her nation during World War II as a Women Air Force Service Pilot (W.A.S.P.) among the first women in history trained to fly American military aircraft. She served from 1943 until the W.A.S.P. disbanded in December 1944.

Piloting eight different aircraft including the B-17, B-26, P-39, and her favorite the AT-6, she anti-aircraft training missions against US Army ground and bomber forces, toward aerial targets, and even instructed male cadets in the skill of instrument flight.

Her critical efforts not only prepared trained soldiers and airmen for war, but also freed male pilots to remain in combat.

Strohfus was central in lobbying congress for the recognition of W.A.S.P. as veterans. The law was passed and signed in 1977 that allowed the Secretary of Defense to declare in 1979 that service in the W.A.S.P. was active military service and those serving were Veterans.

Not ready to stop inspiring, since 1991, "Betty Wall" has traveled to 22 states, telling her story to thousands of people, primarily school children. She is a member of the Ninety Nines, Confederate Air Force and in 2001 was inducted into the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame.