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Amelia Earhart's Daughters : The Wild and Glorious Story of American Women Aviators from World War II to the Dawn of the Space Age

David M. Toomey

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The dramatic and inspiring account of two generations of female flyers who broke out of traditional gender roles while breaking the sound barrier

The WASPs of World War II were much more than a group of airborne Rosie the Riveters filling in for the men overseas. The Women's Airforce Service Pilots flew B-26s because men were afraid to; they were able to recover P-38s from deadly inverted spins, and more than once they had to parachute out of aircraft that had been sabotaged. Led by the famous aviatrix Jacqueline Cochran, these forgotten women were superb pilots, the equals of any male fighter jock.

In 1944, the program ended, but the Cold War created yet another brief window of opportunity for American women pilots in aerospace. In a top-secret program that began in 1961, thirteen women passed the same rigorous astronaut tests made famous by The Right Stuff.

Here we meet Geraldyn Cobb, who might have rocketed into space two decades before Sally Ride, and who spearheaded the campaign to allow women to become astronauts. She took her case all the way to the U.S. Congress, but a dramatic two-day hearing demonstrated that, although these women had the right stuff, it was the wrong time.

These are stories of courageous women who lived with danger and fought discrimination. They were targets of "friendly fire," both literal and figurative, from a public which by turn reviled and glamorized them. But they wrote unique chapters in America's race to space-chapters which are all the more important because they've been overlooked for almost fifty years.

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