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## Groundbreaking Aviators in Tulsa Recognized For Their Service

Posted: Mar 31, 2010 10:45 PM

Updated: Apr 01, 2010 3:20 PM

By Rick Wells, The News On 6

TULSA, OK -- Two of Oklahoma's groundbreaking aviators were showing off their Congressional Gold Medals at a reception in Tulsa Wednesday.

They were honored as members of the Women Air Force Service Pilots, or WASPs, the first women ever to fly U.S. military aircraft.

"We were very young, we were having a good time and supporting our country."

Betty Riddle and Betty Smith are residents at the Country Club of Woodland Hills, a retirement community in south Tulsa. They're back from Washington D.C. and a Congressional Gold Medal ceremony honoring their service in the WASPs, the Women Air Force Service Pilots.

"I wanted to fly ever since I was 8 years old," Betty Riddle said.

When the U.S. entered World War II, every available male pilot was needed to fly combat aircraft, so hundreds of enthusiastic women pilots joined the WASP. They flew every kind of aircraft available.

"I flew about 20 different kinds," said Betty Smith.

Betty Smith ferried airplanes all over the country. Betty Riddle was a test pilot. She certified that needed maintenance was done properly.

The residents where they live threw them a little party to recognize their congressional Gold Medals.

There were nearly 1,000 WASPs serving during the height of World War II. There are fewer than 300 still alive today.

They were young, and it was their life's great adventure. Now nearly 70 years later, Congress recognized it for what it really was: an essential service to our country during World War II.

There are only three former WASPS living in Oklahoma, one in Oklahoma City and two in Tulsa.

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#### WWII Women Aviators Honored For Their Service



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There were nearly 1,000 WASPs serving during the height of World War II.



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Only three WASPs live in Oklahoma including the two Tulsa aviators.



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Women Air Force Service Pilots are also known as WASPs.

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