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Family and friends recall Mickey Brown's love of flying

Story by [Camille Doty](#)

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The Women Airforce Service Pilots were part of an elite group. About 25,000 women applied, and 1,074, including Eleanor Brown, of Victoria, were accepted and passed the training.

Eleanor "Mickey" McLernon Brown was a woman of many talents: a test pilot, model, quilter and political activist.

But more than that, Congress recognized her as a hero for her service during World War II.

As a member of the Women Airforce Service Pilots, Brown was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2009.

The pilots were the first women to fly American military aircraft and tested almost every type of aircraft operated by the United States Army Air Force during World War II, according to the White House website.

A resident of Victoria, Brown died Feb. 19 at age 89.

George Brown, 56, recalled how his mother kept extensive articles from magazines, publications and travel logs during her life.

The black-and-white text couldn't capture her life. Now, Brown's second oldest child will miss the quality time.

"I'm going to miss her stories," he said.

The mother of four was born Nov. 3, 1922, in Tampico, Mexico. Her family later moved to San Antonio.

She put herself through flight training. Her son said she had to have a license before entering the military, where she joined the Women Airforce Service Pilots, also known as WASP.

The grandmother of four never paid attention to barriers and defied the odds. She was one of 1,074 women accepted into the WASP program of the estimated 25,000 women who initially applied. The group of women fixed and flew aircraft during World War II.

Her son, who lives in Victoria, said not everyone was receptive to women flying planes during the war.

"Some people didn't think they could do it," he said.

The WASP group was disbanded in December 1944. But instead of scrambling to find a ride home from Florida, Brown flew a plane to San Antonio, where she became the woman mechanic at Kelly Air Force Base.

At the University of Texas, Brown met Robert Storey Brown, who became her husband of 60 years.

Their son said the family explored the country on monthlong trips during the summer.

As he was growing up, he said, his mother would demonstrate how a woman could handle any task as well as a man.

More than a half a century later after completing her duty, Brown received a Congressional Gold Medal in 2009 for her service in the WASPs from 1944-45.

George Brown and other family members were by her side at the nation's Capitol when she received the medal.

"The experience was thrilling and long overdue," he said.

Over the years, some of Brown's activities included volunteering at Christ's Kitchen and Habitat for Humanity.

She also served as a WASP representative in the Midwestern district. Brown worked with younger generations as a 4-H leader and Cub Scouts den mother.

Brown's active lifestyle and love for flying never died. When she was 86 years old, she took her last flight on an AT-6 airplane.

"It was like riding a bicycle," her son said. "She never forgot."

Ernestine Kidder, of Victoria, worked with Brown in Women's Circle group at First Presbyterian Church. Kidder described her former church member as an active, dependable and biblical woman.

"She was central to our church work," Kidder said.

Brown volunteered in the kitchen and outside in the garden, and helping others was automatic for Brown. Kidder described her as an unsung hero.

"She is a legend that has passed and left her mark," Kidder said.

Brown is survived by her four children and four grandchildren. Her memorial service had full military service.

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