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Women's History Month: Hazel's Moment in Time

Submitted by [Ken Beaton](#) on Sat, 02/26/2011 – 10:18pm

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CARSON CITY, Nev. — A stunt pilot, Frank Hawks, unknowingly changed the direction of history for half the world's population on Tuesday, December 28, 1920.

All he did was take a 23-year-old former tomboy who defied normal female behavior for a 10 minute ride in his plane. "By the time I had got two or three hundred feet off the ground, I knew I had to fly," exclaimed Amelia Mary Earhart.

When Amelia Earhart was the guest speaker at a junior high school assembly in Bayonne, New Jersey during the 1934-35 school year, she changed the life of at least one eighth grader, Hazel Marjorie Stamper.

March is Women's History Month. Read more by [clicking here](#).

From that moment forward Hazel learned all she could about flying. She wanted to attend an aeronautical college after graduating from Lincoln High School in June 1939. Unfortunately, her Dad insisted she attend secretarial college to become a secretary. Hazel's heart was not into becoming a secretary. She flunked out of business school.

Hazel had several jobs while taking flying lessons before she was 21. She enlisted in the WASP, Women Airforce Service Pilot. At Mitchell Field she received the same physical as male pilots. Hazel wrote, "At one point the doctor had me take off all my clothes and do some aerobic-like exercises. But I've always wondered if all

WASPs had to do this.” On November 1, 1943 she reported to Avenger Field in Sweet water, Texas.

She wrote, “The plan was for the WASPs to take over all flying jobs in the US, relieving male pilots for combat.” WASP students would be sent home if they dated an instructor. The students discovered many good students were “washing out” because there were a couple of instructors who tried to get rid of as many of the students as possible. When those instructors were fired, the excessive washout rate stopped.

From May 23, 1944 until the WASPs were disbanded on December 20, 1944 every day for Hazel was filled with the thrill of flying a different plane to a different air base. Hazel loved the glamour of being a pilot. She was paid to fly while contributing to win The War.

When Hazel married and became a mother, her two sons and two daughters turned her world 180 degrees. Cleaning house and dusting; preparing and cooking meals; washing clothes, floors, and dishes; four pregnancies and raising children; along with being a wife day after day was not the same as being a WASP. Hazel’s WASP friendships lasted a lifetime. Her moment in time was dressing in her flight clothing and parachute, climbing into a cockpit and taking off into the wild blue yonder free as a bird.

Hazel was the mother of one Susan Hohn of Carson City and Carol of Douglas County. Hazel lived in Carson City from 1959 to 1992, moving to Reno in 1992 when in 2002 she died of breast cancer. She was involved in the Reno Air Races, The 99s, and WASP, Women Airforce Service Pilot, and reunions during those years.

Today’s women have career opportunities because they are standing on the shoulders of the trailblazing women of past generations like Hazel Marjorie Stamper Hohn, October, 13, 1922 to January 15, 2002.

March is [Women’s History Month](#). I suggest you read at least one book about a woman who contributed to improving your life.

— **Writer Ken Beaton is a retired secondary business teacher who enjoys reading, writing, traveling, and conversational Italian. He is a 35-year Carson City resident and an active volunteer. Ken was voted Kiwanian of the Year by the Kiwanis of Sierra Nevada, the evening club.**

Photo 1: Hazel Marjorie Stamper, a WASP trainee, at Avenger Field in Sweet water, Texas in late 1943 or early 1944.

Photo 2: Hazel Marjorie Stamper, a WASP pilot in her Airforce Blue uniform.

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