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A Local Life: Margaret Kerr Boylan, 89, piloted military planes around U.S. during World War II

Unlike male pilots at the time, who usually specialized in a particular plane, Mrs. Boylan and other women flew a diverse body of aircraft, including fighters, bombers and cargo planes.

From her post in Romulus, Mich., Mrs. Boylan piloted P-51 Mustangs, P-39 Airacobras, P-40 Warhawks and hulking twin-engine B-25 bombers.

Mrs. Boylan said that having experience in the cockpit of such a wide variety of aircraft had its advantages - sometimes to the embarrassment of her male colleagues.



Margaret Kerr Boylan, who served as a pilot during World War II, helped lead a successful lobbying effort in the 1970s to secure federal benefits and veteran status for WASPs. (Gerald Martineau/Post)

"Some men were refusing to fly certain planes - P-39s, B-26s - because they said they had a lot of bugs and were killing people," Mrs. Boylan told The Post in 1977. "They had us fly the planes and that way they shamed the men into flying them."

Margaret Ellis Kerr was born Feb. 6, 1921, in Ada, Okla. Her uncle was Robert S. Kerr, the first native Oklahoman to serve as governor. He also served three terms in the U.S. Senate, representing his home state as a Democrat.

After the war, Mrs. Boylan graduated from Columbia University and worked in public relations for

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Northeast Airlines.

In June 1948, she met her future husband, Robert J. Boylan, at an Aviation Writers Association convention in Montreal. They married six weeks later and moved to Washington, where Mrs. Boylan's husband joined the State Department as a Foreign Service officer in 1951. She traveled with him to postings in Singapore, Australia, Japan and India.

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From 1964 to 1986, Mrs. Boylan served as a congressional liaison and branch chief for the Federal Aviation Administration.

Her husband died in 1980. Survivors include her three children, Robert J. Boylan IV of Swoope, Va., Ann Mazzullo of Fairfax Station and Elisabeth Boylan of Silver Spring; two sisters; a brother; and five grandchildren.

In the mid-1970s, Mrs. Boylan helped lead a group of former WASPs lobbying to gain federal benefits and veteran status. By fall

1977, they finally received recognition from Congress.

In all, WASPs flew more than 60 million miles around the country during the war.

"We worked seven days a week, sunup to sundown," Mrs. Boylan told The Post. "Sometimes we'd get on a commercial flight (after a ferry run) with our uniforms and our parachutes on and other passengers would start getting off. They wanted to know, 'Why don't we have parachutes?'"

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