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Woman who flew for US in WWII finally gets honors

Updated 8:16 pm, Monday, May 27, 2013



In this May 23, 2013 photo, Cheryl Marie Michell, of Royal Oak, poses with a photo of her aunt Marie Michell Robinson, who was a Woman Airforce Service Pilot that died during World War II, but never received military recognition for her service as a co-pilot and was deemed a civilian. Michell, along with a group called Operation Celestial Flight have fought to have all 38 women who died during the war as WASP to be recognized for their military service. Michell's aunt received those honors on Monday, May 27, 2013, at White Chapel Cemetery in Troy, Mich. DETROIT NEWS OUT, TV OUT, INTERNET OUT, MAGS OUT, , MANDATORY CREDIT Photo: Detroit Free Press, Kimberly P. Mitchell



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TROY, Mich. (AP) — One of the 1,000-plus women who flew for the armed forces during World War II but waited decades to earn full military recognition was the focus of her family's thoughts at a Memorial Day graveside ceremony.

Michell's family gathered at White Chapel

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The 20-year-old Detroit newlywed died Oct. 2, 1944, when her plane crashed during a training flight over California's Mojave Desert.

"She's finally getting her honors now," said niece Cheryl Marie Michell of Royal Oak, who told the Detroit Free Press (<http://on.freep.com/12JC8jJ>) she

has made it a mission to honor the service of her aunt and 37 other members of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots program who died in service.

Known as WASPs, the women flew planes during the war but weren't treated as military personnel. It was 32 years after WWII ended that President Jimmy Carter made them eligible for veterans' benefits.

"To Marie, flying was just a natural thing. She loved it," said Maria Michell's older brother, 90-year-old Roy Michell of Holt. He enlisted in the Navy after flight training didn't work out. "I figured, right from the start, she was a better pilot than I was."

In 1984, the WASPs received the American Campaign Medal and World War II Victory Medal, and in 2009, President Barack Obama signed legislation awarding them the Congressional Gold Medal.

"It's helped me understand what a great impact that women can have on the world. These women proved it a long time ago," said Cheryl Michell, a mother and grandmother. "For me personally, I've got her blood running in my veins, and it makes me feel more empowered."

Information from: Detroit Free Press, <http://www.freep.com>

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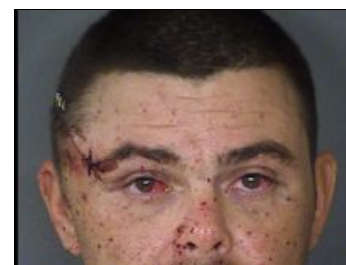
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