

The Palm Beach Post NEWS

An Evening With **STING**

FEATURING THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC CONCERT ORCHESTRA
Conducted by STEVEN MERCURIO

On Sale Monday at 10am!
FRIDAY, JULY 2

Presented by **XEROX**

CRUZAN AMPHITHEATRE
At the South Florida Fairgrounds

BUY TICKETS AT **LIVENATION.com**

HOME	NEWS	WEATHER	SPORTS	MONEY	OBITUARIES	OPINION	LIVING	ENTERTAINMENT	PHOTOS	VIDEOS	PLACE AN AD
SERVICES											

Home > Local News

Female WWII pilot from Boca awarded Congressional Gold Medal



Bill Ingram/The Post

ENLARGE PHOTO

Mary Hearn, 89, with her Congressional Gold Medal, during ceremonies honoring her Thursday in Boca Raton.

LATEST LOCAL NEWS »

► Andy Roddick cruises and Rafael Nadal also advances at the Sony Ericsson
Updated 11:01 p.m.

► Close cracks in Martin: Don't delegate commission power to new board 9:28 p.m.

► Construction in dumper; why not expand runway, put people to work? 9:28 p.m.

► Palm Beach County School Board's Graham vows to defer payout if reelected
Updated 8:06 p.m. | Comments 6

► Audi, Orchard Hill post wins in opening round of polo's Arcalux U.S. Open
Updated 7:36 p.m.

[More headlines](#)

LOCAL NEWS BLOGS

Bino's Blogaroni (Frank Cerabino) »
More on Neil Zirconia, the fake Neil Diamond



Extra Credit (Schools & Education) »
Teachers' union plans work slowdown



Eye on the Storm (Extreme weather) »
Palm Beach County Emergency Manager Leaving



By **SAMANTHA FRANK**
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Updated: 5:22 p.m. Sunday, March 28, 2010
Posted: 5:02 p.m. Sunday, March 28, 2010

[Post a Comment](#) | [E-mail](#) | [Print](#) | [Share](#) | [Larger Type](#)

Mary Hearn doesn't feel as though she deserves any accolades, but the U.S. government and nearly everyone she meets thinks otherwise.

On March 10, the 89-year-old Boca Raton resident was awarded a Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award in the U.S., for her service during World War II in the Women Airforce Service Pilots.

She was one of 1,078 women who earned their wings during the war and one of only about 300 who are still alive. More than 65 years after they completed their service, all of them were recognized for their wartime contributions with the Congressional Gold Medal.

Although Hearn admits that her body is failing her (she uses a walker and can't drive anymore), her mind is sharp and her memory impeccable.

"She's a firecracker," said Patti Macchi, Hearn's daughter and only child, who lives in Coral Springs.

Hearn grew up in a military family and was one of five children. Her father was a U.S. naval officer, which meant that he and his family moved every few years up and down the East Coast, depending on where he was stationed.

Although Hearn admired her father, they didn't always see eye to eye.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Hearn said she felt compelled to give back to her country and get involved in the war effort in some way. When she told her father she was planning to join the WAVES, a division of the U.S. Navy that consisted entirely of women, he was horrified.

"He said, 'The Navy is no place for a young lady,'" Hearn said. "He wanted me to stay at home and knit socks and mufflers."

But she remained persistent, and when she saw an advertisement in The Washington Post with photos of women in flight suits, she knew she had found her calling.

Her father agreed to let her join the Women Airforce Service Pilots only because he assumed that the war would be over before she would complete her training.

After passing a rigorous training program, Hearn became a test pilot for planes in the maintenance department at what was then known as the Marana Army Air Field in Arizona. Every day she would fly

SEARCH [input] Site Web Web Search by YAHOO!

Barrett-Jackson

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTOR CAR AUCTIONS™

AMERICRAFT EXPO CENTER

AT THE SOUTH FLORIDA FAIRGROUNDS

APRIL 1-3, 2010

GET YOUR TICKETS!

www.Barrett-Jackson.com or call 480.663.6255

Historic Archive
(1897 - 1988)

Search historic editions of *The Palm Beach Post*, *Palm Beach Daily News*, *Miami News* and more. It's free!

[input] SEARCH

Get this search box for your site.

MOST POPULAR

[HEADLINES](#) [E-MAILED](#) [COMMENTS](#)

Adam Walsh murder revisited: The case against Jeffrey Dahmer

Florida poll: Obama, Democrats to pay political price for healthcare reform

Pratt & Whitney cancer study in Connecticut dwarfs investigation in The Acreage

Florida Highway Patrol hunts man accused of shooting at state troopers in Central Florida

FBI: Woman charged after Honduran sisters say she forced them to work in West Palm strip club



POSTPIX » Latest news photos



Palm City Marine killed in Afghanistan



Earth Hour - World goes dark for green

Flashback (Historic Palm Beach) »
 This week in history: First blacks elected to West Palm Beach commission, and first woman mayor



Post on Politics (Local and Florida) »
 Heated debate between Marco Rubio and Charlie Crist starts fast



Seeing Green (Environment) »
 Corruption-tainted, \$200 million reservoir brackish and won't be tapped for years



West Palm Beat (City happenings) »
 Mitchell named new president of West Palm commission



about five planes, making sure they functioned properly.

"I just took to flying like a duck to water," she said. "I was too stupid to be afraid."

Having women as test pilots during the war relieved the male pilots for combat duty.

Marana Army Air Field also has a special place in Hearn's heart because it was where she met her husband. One hot summer day while she was swimming in the officers' pool, a man who was also swimming bumped into her.

"Seven months later, we were married," Hearn said.

Her husband, Lura, who died in 2003, was an instructor pilot at the time they met. He remained in the military for 35 years. They have one daughter, two grandsons and a great-grandson.

St. Andrews Estates North, the senior community in Boca Raton where Hearn has lived for the past 15 years, recently held a celebration in her honor. When someone at the celebration asked why Hearn doesn't think she deserves the Congressional Gold Medal, she was quick to smile and say, "Because I had so much fun doing what I did."

Hearn and her family attended the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony earlier this month in Washington, D.C.

Each gold medal recipient was taken around by an escort, and Hearn was in awe of hers — a female Air Force captain with two young children. Seeing a young mother pursuing her dreams really brought to light the importance of the work Hearn did during World War II.

"I guess we kind of broke the glass ceiling," she said.

Share this article:

1 COMMENT

Comments feed

ADD COMMENT

god bless you-thank you for your service! you make me proud to live in the USA!!

joel rifkin
8:51 PM, 3/28/2010

REPORT ABUSE

We'd like your thoughts on this story. I appreciate your willingness to share them. At PalmBeachPost.com, we want to avoid comments that are obscene, hateful, racist or otherwise inappropriate. If you post offensive comments, we will delete them as soon as we can. If you see such comments, please report them to us.

Tim Burke, Executive Editor, The Palm Beach Post

Name:

E-mail:

Comments:

500 character limit



Frozen beauty: Photos of winter



Haiti attempts to recover after quake

FROM OUR NEWS PARTNERS

- ▶ Bakery receives marijuana shipment
- ▶ Girl, 14, dies after falling off cliff on bike
- ▶ Bullets shatter Atlanta courthouse window
- ▶ Man formally charged in murder of Somer Thompson
- ▶ Declare 'Confedrate Southern American' on Census forms, group says
- ▶ \$281-million award against Turner Broadcasting upheld
- ▶ Feds indict man accused of keeping girl as sex slave
- ▶ Bicycle bank robber makes clean getaway
- ▶ Coroner mix-up gets wrong man cremated
- ▶ Plane bolt falls from sky, shatters sunroof

28 SUN 29 MON 30 TUE 31 WED 1 THU ALL EVENTS

Upcoming events:

- 7:30 pm Saturday Paul McCartney
 - Noon 4/10 Bengali New Year
 - 8 pm 7/02 An evening with STING featuring the R
- Search for an event:

SEARCH

FEATURED STUFF

Old Paintings 239-248-8566
Buying Old Paintings in Any...

Antique Furniture for \$300 772-634-1309
Chairs-6 Federal \$200; Breakfront...

Riverside Memorial Park-Tequesta Mausoleum 561-841-5702
Riverside Memorial Park-Tequesta Mausoleum Crypt,...

Moving Sale for \$650 215-499-8666
Moving Sale-All Must Go...

Old Paintings 239-248-8566
Buying Old Paintings in Any...

View All Featured Stuff