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World War II WASP veteran gets to fly again

WASP 028



5 hours ago • [Rob Earnshaw](#) rob.earnshaw@nwi.com, (219) 548-4352

VALPARAISO | In 1940, Evelyn Laesch Farley was a 25-year-old beauty shop owner in Flint, Mich. But she wanted to do what few women were known to do at that time — fly.

Not only did she receive her pilot's license, Farley went on to become one of about 2,000 civilian women who became Women's Airforce Service Pilots, who were employed to fly military aircraft under the direction of the United States Army Air Forces during World War II.

On Monday Farley, 100, got to fly again.

Farley lives at Avalon Springs Health Campus in Valparaiso, where she told staff a few weeks ago during



Evelyn Farley, 100, is helped into a plane Monday before taking a flight at the Porter County Regional Airport.

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breakfast that she was proud to have been in a plane and that "there's nothing else like it." A few days later while making crafts Farley told the staff that "flying was easier." Staff members quickly discovered Farley's history with WASP and when Farley said she'd like to "go up one more time," Avalon Springs made it happen.

Beth Bertram, the facility's lifestyle enrichment director, said an Avalon Springs program helps grant wishes for seniors.

"And anything we can do to make her life better, we're going to do it."

Avalon Springs got in touch with Donna Stevens, owner of DonnAir, a flight school at Porter County Regional Airport, who agreed to take Farley for a plane ride.

"With her being a former WASP, and being a female pilot myself, I was all for it," Stevens said. "I think that's quite an honor for me."

When asked where she wanted to fly to before boarding the plane, Farley said "to the moon."

She didn't go quite that far, but Stevens took her on a 30-minute flight over the region, during which Stevens said Farley had a smile on her face almost the entire time.

"I love it," Farley said after touching down. "The whole freedom. Driving a car, you've got to stay in your lane. Flying an airplane, you can go anyplace. You've got the whole sky."

News articles on Farley have been collected by the Library of Congress. One headline reads "Girl Makes It." It was a reference to Farley, who was the only one of six candidates to pass a flying examination at Flint's Bishop Airport. The other five were all men. The article refers to Farley as someone who beat the men "in a man's game."

In a quote from that article Farley said she was in the air "every minute I can spare from the beauty shop."

Farley was 27 when she was accepted into the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Service, which along with the 319th Women's Flying Training Detachment merged into WASP.

According to the article, Farley had a sister at the time living in Valparaiso who she visited on the way to training in Texas.

Farley said when she told her dad she wanted to fly he said to "get those silly ideas out of your head." Farley was grateful, however, that her father let her use his car to go drive to her lessons.

According to records the female pilots of the WASP ended up numbering 1,074, each freeing a male pilot for combat service and duties. They flew more than 60 million miles in every type of military aircraft. Between Sept. 1942 and Dec. 1944, the WASP delivered 12,650 aircraft of 77 different types. More than 50 percent of the ferrying of high-speed pursuit type aircraft in the continental United States was carried out by WASP pilots.



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The WASP was granted veteran status in 1977, and given the Congressional Gold Medal in 2009.

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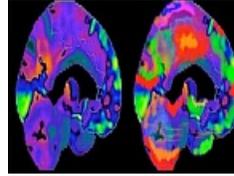
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