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## Two Fairbanks women who flew airplanes in World War II honored

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FAIRBANKS - When she was growing up, Nancy Baker just wanted a job where she could wear jeans and boots everyday.

“Growing up, I thought being a woman was a pain in the neck,” said Baker, who turns 90 next year. “I thought it was boring, and I always wanted to fly.”

While career opportunities for women were limited in the late 1930s and early '40s, Baker stuck to her dream, and joined Virginia's Civilian Pilot Training Program when the

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governor mandated that one out of every 10 pilots had to be a woman.

After that, she took a job with Piper Aircraft and continued to build up her flight hours before being accepted to, and eventually graduating from, the Women Airforce Service Pilots, commonly known as WASP.

For her service as a WASP, Baker and fellow Fairbanksan Virginia Wood were honored Friday by Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who presented them with bronze medal replicas of the Congressional Gold Medal that was presented to 200 surviving WASPs last month in Washington, D.C. It is the highest civilian honor bestowed by Congress.

While Wood didn't feel up to it, Baker, wearing a pair of jeans, accepted her award at the 42nd Annual Military Appreciation Banquet. Baker remained modest about the honor.

“I thought I didn't deserve it,” she said. “We did the same thing as the men pilots.”

However, she noted, that the WASPs were important in paving the way for women to have better opportunities in the armed forces.

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