



[Donate \(http://www.sdpb.org/donate/\)](http://www.sdpb.org/donate/)



Listen Live · SDPB Radio
World Cafe

LOADING...



WWII Female Lakota Pilot Honored At Luncheon

By JIM KENT • 20 HOURS AGO

[Twitter \(http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fgv75ob5&text=WWII%](http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fgv75ob5&text=WWII%2F)






(http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/sdpb/files/styles/x_large/public/201605/millie_rexroat.jpg).

Ola "Millie" Rexroat - Oglala Lakota - was the only Native American member of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (W.A.S.P.).

CREDIT COURTESY OLA "MILLIE" REXROAT

World War Two veterans are dying at a rate of 1000 per day. In an effort to acknowledge those who remain, a luncheon to honor them is taking place in Rapid City today. Among the activities planned for the gathering is a special honoring for one of the few remaining female military pilots of "The Greatest Generation."

 Listen
0:00

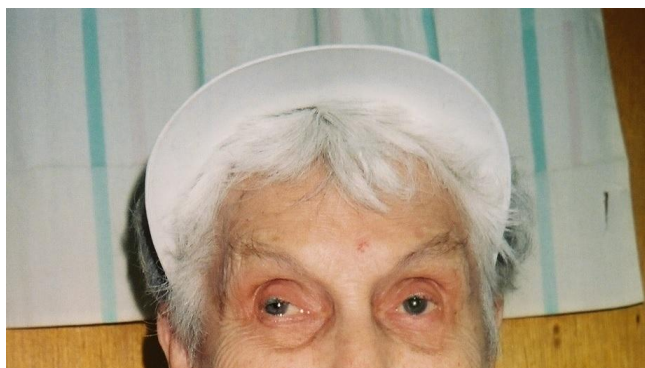
Comments by former WWII Women Airforce Service Pilots (W.A.S.P.) Ola "Millie" Rexroat and Bill Casper, organizer of the annual World War II Veterans Luncheon in Rapid City.

When The Army Air Corps song was written in 1917 the average life-span of an American pilot flying over Europe in World War One was about 3 weeks.

Twenty-five years and a second worldwide conflict later those odds had changed in favor of the pilots. But little had changed in favor of women in the military, as Ola "Millie" Rexroat recalled in a 2009 interview with SDPB.

"I had some skills," explained Millie, "but that consisted of typing and shorthand and other office procedures."

And that's pretty much what the military was looking for from women - administrative support. But Millie wanted to do more.



I thought, if I had some background or doing something, maybe I could do something that really made a difference," Millie recalled. "I thought...if I could do something like fly."

So Millie Rexroat, an Oglala Lakota tribal member, paid for her own private flying lessons. As fate would have it, the Army Air Corps was looking for female pilots. They didn't go into combat...but they did pull targets for anti-aircraft batteries to practice on and that was dangerous enough. The 1074 W.A.S.P.s - Women Airforce Service Pilots - also ferried planes and personnel.

Bill Casper is the organizer for the annual World War Two Veterans luncheon in Rapid City.

"I think too often...you know...the men get the glory and the women are just kind of... they were there," Casper observes. "And I think it's important to honor them as well...so we'll do that."

One-hundred and fourteen World War Two veterans are expected at the luncheon including 8 other women who served in uniform.

Link to 2009 SDPB interview with Ola "Millie" Rexroat

<http://www.sdpb.sd.gov/newsite/shows.aspx?MediaID=48354&Parmltype=RADIO&ParmAccessLevel=sdpb-all>
(<http://www.sdpb.sd.gov/newsite/shows.aspx?MediaID=48354&Parmltype=RADIO&ParmAccessLevel=sdpb-all>)

TAGS: [NEWS \(/TERM/NEWS\)](#) [FEMALE PILOT \(/TERM/FEMALE-PILOT\)](#)

[WWII LUNCHEON \(/TERM/WWII-LUNCHEON\)](#)



(http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/sdpb/files/8_millie_rexroat_1.jpg)

Millie Rexroat at the time of her 2009 SDPB interview.

CREDIT PHOTO BY JIM KENT