



A WASP Homecoming for Two Denver-Area Residents

Powder Puff Pilot and Ninety-Nines Sponsor Flight for Women Pilots of World War II

May 21, 2010 – Aurora, Colorado – It’s been 67 years since Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas earned its distinction as the largest all-female air base in U.S. history. It won’t seem nearly that long to two Denver-area residents who were former members of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP).

On Memorial Day weekend, Lucille Doll Wise, 90, of Arvada and Betty Jo Streff Reed, 86, of Aurora will take to the air again to attend the WASP Homecoming 2010, hosted by the National WASP WWII Museum in Sweetwater. They’ll be among the honorees welcomed back to where they made history in 1943 and 1944 as the first American women to receive military flight training.

Wise was one of 59 women of the seventh class of women pilots (43-W-7) to train at Sweetwater, graduating in November 1943. She was assigned to North Carolina to the Asheville Weather Wing of the Army Airways Communications System, and then to the Kansas City Army Air Base. During her service, she flew the Cessna UC-78, AT-11, C-60, B-25, and C-45. Many of her flights involved transporting weather officers on inspection trips. In 1993, she donated her WASP uniform—trench coat, flight suit, battle jacket, Santiago blue slacks, white wool shirt, and tie—to the WASP museum.



WASP Lucille Doll Wise in the uniform she donated to the National WASP Museum, photo courtesy of the Texas Women's University, 1944



Former WASP Betty Jo Streff Reed, U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Desiree N. Palacios, 2009

Reed trained at Sweetwater a year after Wise, graduating in the seventh class of 1944 (44-W-7) in September 1944. Her service ended prematurely when the Army deactivated the WASP program in December 1944. She was assigned to Columbus Army Air Field in Mississippi, where she flew the AT-6, PT-17, and AT-10.

Sue Hughes and her husband Dale, of Aurora, will fly the former WASP in their four-seat Piper Arrow from Front Range Airport in Watkins (just 5 miles southeast of Denver International Airport) to Avenger Field. “I must admit I’m little intimidated at the thought of these two accomplished, pioneer aviatrixes as back seat pilots,” said Hughes, who is also a flight instructor.

Hughes answered the call when a request went out to members of the Colorado chapter of The Ninety-Nines, an international organization of women pilots, for a volunteer to transport the honorees. The trip is sponsored in part by Jan McKenzie, a Colorado chapter member and governor of The Ninety-Nines’ South Central section, which includes Texas and Colorado. Hughes is owner and founder of Powder Puff Pilot, a

web retailer that specializes in products for and about women pilots, and is the author of a series of children’s books that feature a pink-clad aerobatic aviatrix, Claire Bear.