

Sisters in the Sky: Volume 1 - The WAFS



It was on Easter Sunday, 1935, when young, tall, skinny, Adela Rick decided she wanted to learn to fly. After church she drove to Lambert Field, then in the virtually uninhabited wilds of St. Louis County. She donned a borrowed pair of white mechanics coveralls, climbed into the cockpit of a biplane, and she hasn't been the same since. In 1940 she became, in rapid succession, Lambert Fields first female commercial pilot, its first woman ground instructor, and its first female flight instructor. War burst upon America on December 7, 1941, and several months later Scharr was invited to join the Womens Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron at New Castle Army Air Base, Wilmington, Delaware. From there she ferried Piper Cubs and other small craft used to train the pilots who would later win the air war against Germany and Japan. Later the initial core group broke apart and Adela became the commanding officer of the cadre sent to Romulus Army Air Base, near Detroit. From there she flew the BT-13 (Vultee Vibrator), the AT-6 North American Texan, Curtiss-Wrights twin-engine AT-9, and other larger and more powerful planes. The crowning achievement of this volume occurred on the 28th of June, 1943, when she became the first woman to fly the dangerous P-39, the Bell Airacobra. During her years with the ferrying service she wrote to her husband, Harold N. Scharr, several times a week. She must have felt that she was doing something historic, for in her first letter she asked that he save all their correspondence. Furthermore, she saved all her aeronautical charts used during her flights, her log books, her orders, and in fact every scrap of paper that would help her remember those years. ...

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