



Nancy Love: WASP Pilot

Sarah Byrn Rickman

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Straightforward and exciting, Nancy Love: WASP Pilot is the breezy young adult biography of a little-known home front heroine.

Sarah Byrn Rickman's biography for young readers, *Nancy Love*, focuses on a groundbreaking pilot who brought her fellow women pilots together to serve their country during World War II.

From the age of sixteen, Nancy Harkness Love's greatest passion was flying. During World War II, she turned that passion into history-making service. From 1942 to 1944, she was in charge of an all-women's flight squadron that ferried training airplanes and, later, pursuit airplanes to wherever they were needed. Again and again, Love confronted sexism, government meddling, and tragedy so that she could serve her country the best way that she knew how: by flying.

The book traces Nancy Love's life from her days as a teenage flying student to her post-war retirement in Martha's Vineyard, but most space is devoted to her time with the all-women flying groups WAFS and WASP. Clear language is used to tell her story and to explain unfamiliar or difficult concepts. Love's bravery and modesty are apparent; she is calm and competent, a leader who remained devoted to her mission despite the political intrigue surrounding her.

The book spends little time on Love's personal life or her relationships with her family and friends. Love's voice is missing from the narrative: most of the information about her comes secondhand, as she was too much of a perfectionist to ever complete her memoirs. As Rickman puts it, "That is our loss."

In addition to discussing Love's struggles and important achievements, the book includes fun anecdotes, showing how Love flew a plane to work during World War II because airplane fuel, unlike gasoline for cars, was not rationed. There are many included photographs of Love throughout her life and career, and of the planes that she loved to fly. Engaging bonus material includes a short 1943 comic about Love's exploits and a list of the awards and honors that she earned, both during her lifetime and posthumously.

Though thorough research is apparent, there's little emphasis on the nitty-gritty of politics or technical explanations, and the text moves with speed. Its focus is squarely on Nancy Love herself, making it easy to follow her story, feel her disappointments, and cheer her accomplishments. The end result is an accessible, enjoyable introduction to one of America's most influential women pilots.

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EILEEN GONZALEZ (November 18, 2019)

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