



Jacqueline Cochran: Biography of a Pioneer Aviator

Rhonda Smith-daugherty

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Although Amelia Earhart remains the best-known female pilot of the 1930s, Jacqueline Cochran stood as the more important aviation pioneer and America's top woman pilot. Among her many accomplishments, Cochran was the first female aviator to win the Bendix Air Race, to fly a bomber, to break the speed of sound, and to participate in astronaut training. This revealing biography explores Cochran's childhood in an impoverished Florida mill town, her early career as a pilot, and her role in creating and leading the WASPs during World War II. It also chronicles her postwar exploits, including her participation in the NASA space program, her unsuccessful 1956 bid for Congress, and her surprising reluctance to crusade for the advancement of women. This detailed profile, removing Cochran from Earhart's shadow, firmly establishes the aviatrix as a pivotal figure in the history of women in aviation and in war.



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