

HISTORY OF THE UNIFORMS OF THE WASP OF WWII

1942 saw a new species of military pilot for the AAF — **women** — the Women Airforce Service Pilots –WASP-- the first women in history to fly America's military aircraft.

When the girl pilots reported for military flight training, the only uniform they were issued were **used airplane mechanics' coveralls**—smallest size: 44 long, and because they were expected to 'pass in review' for visiting Generals, they were required to buy tan slacks and a white blouse. Forevermore, these pants would be nicknamed, 'General's Pants'.



(Dress Uniform) In 1943, the WASP' fashion conscious Director, Jacqueline Cochran, convinced Gen Hap Arnold that the girl pilots should have their own uniforms. His comment: *"They should be BLUE"*. The Quartermaster Corps offered 40,000 yards of olive drab wool material. Cochran's comment, *"My girl pilots will never wear that!"* Cochran, together with the fashion designers at Bergdorf Goodman in New York, designed a uniform for the approval of Gen Hap Arnold and Gen George C. Marshall. Two sample uniforms were made: one with the olive drab wool material and one with a 'classy' Santiago blue wool gabardine, which coincidentally resembles a color now called "Air Force Blue." A gorgeous French model was selected to model the blue uniform and a Quartermaster Corps clerk was recruited to model the olive drab uniform. The Generals chose the blue uniform, and it became the official WASP uniform. Neiman Marcus fashion coordinators from Dallas personally fitted each girl for her uniform before her class graduated from training.

The Santiago blue dress uniform has a skirt and a fitted, belted jacket, with the AAF emblem on the left sleeve, the insignia of the Command in which the WASP served on the shoulder epaulets, the WASP emblem and the AAF propeller emblem on each lapel and her distinctive WASP silver wings worn above the left pocket. Underneath the jacket she wore a white shirt and a black tie. The beret had a three-quarter size officer's shield pinned on the front. A fashionable black leather purse completed the WASP dress uniform.

(Flying Uniform) The Santiago blue uniform for flying consisted of an 'Eisenhower' jacket, with the same hardware as that on the dress uniform, slacks, a blue cotton shirt and a black tie. A baseball style cap 'topped off' the uniform for flying.

The one thousand one hundred and two WASP were not only the first women to fly America's military aircraft, they were also the first pilots to wear the 'Ike' jacket, the first to have their uniforms professionally fitted, and most significantly, they were the first to wear blue uniforms—three years before the Air Force.

The Air Force is proud to include the WASP uniforms as a part of their Air Force uniform history!

Submitted by: Deanie Bishop Parrish,
WASP WWII

For more info on WASP Uniforms: http://www.wasp-wwii.org/wasp/documents/uniform_regulation.pdf
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WASP trainees flying uniform:
"Zoot Suit"--mechanic's coveralls size 44 long.



WASP graduation, 1943-- white blouses, khaki slacks
(called "General's Pants") and overseas caps.



Official WASP
Santiago blue dress uniform:
belted jacket, matching skirt,
beret and purse.



Official WASP Santiago blue flying uniform--Eisenhower jacket,
matching pants, blue shirt, black tie.

