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#### TAKEOFF OF THE 42<sup>ND</sup> AIR RACE CLASSIC FROM SWEETWATER, TEXAS TO FRYEBURG, MAINE

The all women pilot transcontinental race started from Avenger Field to honor the Women Airforce Service Pilots



AVENGER FIELD, SWEETWATER, TEXAS – The National WASP WWII Museum hosted the Start of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Air Race Classic, an all women pilot transcontinental race. Tuesday, June 19, 53 airplanes launched full throttle down the runway at historic Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas, where the Women Airforce Service Pilots trained for military service during World War II. The Museum was selected to honor the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the WASP at Avenger Field, the only all women military base in U.S. history. From there, the racers embarked on a course that will take them 2,656 miles to Fryeburg, Maine, in just four days. WASP have flown the Air Race Classic in previous years and WASP Nell Bright, 44-W-4 was the Honorary Starter and waved the Start Flag with her WASP scarf tied tightly.



Start co-chairs, Sherie Alldredge and Paula Carmichael lead a team of more than a hundred volunteers responsible for hospitality, registration, special events, transportation, timing, inspections and publicity. Alldredge said, “The people and organizations of Sweetwater rallied around this once-in-a-lifetime exciting event to honor the WASP by giving our best to today’s brave and adventurous women pilots.” Adding to the sentiment, Paula Carmichael said, “There are so many people to thank who supported the Air Race and showed these women West Texas hospitality we hope they remember for years. They are welcome back to Sweetwater anytime.”



For nearly a week, Avenger Field was transformed back to a bustling air field where women pilots dominated as they had 75 years earlier when WASP were training during World War II. The racers experienced Sweetwater through a series of events including Rock the Block, a block party in downtown Sweetwater, Friday, June 15. The next day was a Youth Aviation Adventure event where youth in the Big Country met the racers and learned aviation heritage and science. Saturday evening, the racers cheered on the riders at Bucking for Heroes, a professional bull riding competition benefiting veterans.

“Every June, female pilots from across the nation fly the ARC for the competition and camaraderie,” said Air Race Classic President Lara Gaerte. “We are welcoming back veteran racers and meeting new competitors at this year’s Start.”

Lead by the Museum’s BT-13 aircraft, the same type of plane flown by WASP at Avenger Field, the Takeoff was viewed by hundreds lined at the National WASP WWII Museum and Avenger Field to watch this historic event. One girl who was watching, turned her head and was overheard saying, “Mom, I want to be a pilot!”.



Ann Hobing, President & CEO of the National WASP WWII Museum said, “We are honored for Sweetwater being selected to host the Start of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Air Race Classic. Our board, volunteers and community came together to share the legacy of WASP with women pilots from across the country and globe. As WASP said, we wish them Good Luck, Blue Skies and Tail Winds.”

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**About National WASP WWII Museum**

Adjacent to a Texas Historical Commission Landmark and a destination on Texas Forts Trail, National WASP WWII Museum at Avenger Field was incorporated by the State of Texas in 2003 and held its grand opening in 2005. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit relying on contributions is dedicated to honoring the legacy of Woman Airforce Service Pilots and inspiring future generations. The National WASP WWII Museum hosts an annual Homecoming, welcoming WASP and their families to remember those with whom they served. Home to archives, exhibits and aircraft preserving the story of WASP and those who served at Avenger Field, National WASP WWII Museum tells the story of Women Airforce Service Pilots during World War II and the years after their service in which they continued to seek the veteran status and full military honors due them.

For more information, visit [www.waspmuseum.org](http://www.waspmuseum.org) or Facebook @waspmuseum.



**About Air Race Classic**

Air Race Classic Inc. is an all-volunteer, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization with a mission of encouraging and educating current and future female pilots, increasing public awareness of general aviation, demonstrating women's roles in aviation, and preserving and promoting the tradition of pioneering women in aviation. For more information, visit [airraceclassic.org](http://airraceclassic.org). Follow Air Race Classic on Facebook. On Twitter: @AuthenticARC



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