

## Peru Native Honored Posthumously With Congressional Medal

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Isabel (Tynon) Martell, Peru native, was honored posthumously in March at a Congressional Gold Medal ceremony at Washington, D.C.

Martell was among 19 Nebraskans and 1,074 women who were recognized for their service in World War II as Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). They were the first women trained to fly American military planes. WASPs flew noncombat missions to free up male pilots to fly overseas.

Judy Cope, Peru, niece of Martell, said that a lot of women tried to enter the WASPs but could not. The WASPs started out as civilians and were not recognized as part of the military until 1977, Cope said.

"She was so thrilled. She could get a Veterans Administration loan to buy a house. That was wonderful that she could be recognized that she was in the military. A lot of people probably don't know what they did," Cope said.

The WASPs flew more than 60 million miles during World War II in every kind of mission except direct combat. About 25,000 women applied to be WASPs. There were 1,830 accepted and 1,074 completed six months training at Avenger Field near Sweetwater, Texas. Until they were recognized as part of the military, WASPs were not entitled to pay and benefits given to males, such as veterans benefits and a flag at their funeral. Many in the military and Congress never accepted that women could fly just as well as men. The WASPs were terminated suddenly in December 1944.

Only three of the 19 Nebraskans honored are still living: Lois (Bristol) Young, Bayard; Millicent (Peterson) Young, Chappell and Kristin (Swan) Lent, Minden.

Martell's son, Charles and grandson, Dylan, accepted the medal at the Capitol Visitor Center. They live at Molalla and Mulino, Oregon, respectively.

Saturday, June 12, a memorial to the WASPs will be dedicated at Veterans Memorial Garden at Antelope Park, Lincoln. It will include the pilots' names, hometowns and a history of the WASPs. Martell (1920-1994) grew up on the family farm north of Peru. She graduated from Peru Training School and attended Peru State Teachers College. Martell learned to fly and soloed at a small airport north of Peru. She was one semester short of graduating from college when she had to quit and help out on the farm. By June 1943, there were 39 hours entered in Martell's logbook, enough to qualify her for admittance to the WASPs. After graduation, Martell was assigned to testing AT6's before they were turned over to male cadets. She also ferried Serman PT17s.

After World War II, Martell continued to fly and ferried planes to most states. She finished college, earned a masters degree and completed most of the work for a doctorate in literature at the University of North Dakota, where she was an instructor for the school's aviation department. Martell taught journalism, photography and English at Molalla, Ore. She was a part-time flight instructor at Mulino Airport. Martell retired from teaching in 1974.

In 1975, she became an instructor for Aurora Aviation. Martell became chief flight instructor in 1978. She purchased two planes. Martell taught students working to attain various ratings, including private, commercial, instrument, flight instructor, multi-engine, multi-engine instrument and air-transport pilot. Until Martell retired because of health, she logged more than 14,000 hours and helped students earn more than 250 flight ratings. She was proud of all of her students, particularly females.