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## Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan

Welcome to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni's official website. MCAS Iwakuni is the only Marine Corps installation on mainland Japan.

### Women's History Month, highlighting female aviator's dedication to the Corps

By Cpl. Jessica Quezada | Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan | March 20, 2015

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#### Women's History Month, highlighting female aviator's dedication to the Corps

Capt. Sarah Deal, the first female Marine Corps helicopter pilot, flies a CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopter from HMH 466, MCAS Tustin, California, over Camp Pendleton while training during Exercise KERNEL BLITZ '97. As the first woman pinned with Naval flight

wings in Marine Corps history, Lt. Col. Sarah Deal Burrow's determination throughout her career as an aviator laid the foundation for future female Marine Corps pilots.

Image 1 of 3

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## MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan --

Throughout history, women gradually conquered untouched territory in the military and through their diligence; women now serve as permanent and vital members in the Marine Corps.

Not all military specialties are available to women and this professional inequality goes back to an ostracized time when women struggled to lead Marines on land, air and sea.

Today's Marine Corps now flourishes with more career and billet opportunities for women, and female aviators are just a few of the landmark Marines breaking gender stereotypes for their successors.

"My great uncle was a naval pilot in World War II and his stories of serving are what really suckered me into becoming a pilot," said Maj. Christine Houser, a Garden City, N.Y. native and operations officer with Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 225 from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., currently assigned to the Unit Deployment Program aboard Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan. "I visited the U.S. Naval Academy and thought it would be a good career path to go down... After three years of qualifications, courses and all, I finally became a Marine Corps back-seater weapons systems officer for F/A-18 Hornet aircrafts. I love everything about the Corps and everything they offer. If something happened and I couldn't be a pilot, I would much rather do another occupation in the Marine Corps than anywhere else..."

During World War II, females began serving beyond clerical duties as essential service members in more than 200 hundred various occupations across the Marine Corps. To further extend women's role in the military, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 allowed women to serve as permanent members in the armed forces.

Women progressively incorporated their skills in areas of work pertinent to mission success.

In flight line crews, female Marines performed jobs such as refueling, repairing engines and radios, replacing tires, testing the weapons, preparing the plans for their aircrews and bringing the planes on line.

Women successfully trained their male counterparts in flight simulators during WWII to ensure pilots are prepared before taking off, they manned the air traffic towers at nearly every aviation command and worked fearlessly in the sky as aerial photographers.

Although female Marines could not serve in pilot and aircrew specialties in 1975, the Marine Corps later opened its hangars in 1993 to give women an opportunity to become pilots.

Lt. Col. Sarah Deal Burrow took advantage of this opening and, in that same year, she became the first female Marine selected for Naval aviation training.

As the first woman pinned with Naval flight wings in Marine Corps history, Burrow's determination throughout her career as an aviator laid the foundation for future female Marine Corps pilots.

"I just wanted to be a pilot and I've proven myself in a lot of ways," said Houser. "Throughout my career, I've worked

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with very few females. The community is small, but I've always felt like I fit in with the males and in the Marine Corps. As long as you prove yourself and work hard you'll be a part of the team... I've deployed seven times, I've qualified to be an instructor in a squadron, I was a company commander for Marine Wing Support Squadron 372, and I was the first female F/A-18 pilot to attend Weapons Tactic Instructors Course, a very elite course in the Marine Corps... and at this point women continue to break barriers in many ways. Yeah, I was the 'first,' but I worked for something I wanted and accomplished what I could."

In the illustrious history of the Marine Corps, many determined female Marines followed in the footsteps of Burrow by overcoming discrimination and by making landmark achievements to subdue sexism.

Women continue to rise to the top in Marine Corps aviation, from Vernice Armour, the first female African American pilot, to Maj. Jennifer Grieves, the first female pilot of the Marine One aircraft carrying the President of the United States.

These Marines earned their title as the "fewer and prouder" and set the standard not only for female aviators, but for female Marines across the Corps.

"I always tell people that as long as you like what you're doing, keep doing it," said Houser. "I never planned on serving 14 years but now I plan on going for 20...My brothers a Marine too, an infantry officer, and when I'm up in the air providing close air support for the troops on the ground, I think those troops could be friends or even family. If you're unsure about Marine Corps aviation, this is not the job for you, but if this is what you want wholeheartedly, then go for it, work hard and you'll succeed."

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