



THE LATEST NEWS IN BIOGRAPHY

Presented by Biographers International Organization



Member Interview

Six Questions with Raquel Ramsey

What is your current project and at what stage is it?

My current project is the spreading of the legacy of my sister-in-law, Nadine Ramsey, WASP pilot, through the book *Taking Flight: The Nadine Ramsey Story*. Also, I'm working on the documentary based on my book with Jane Seymour as narrator, which was halted by Vanilla Fire Productions in February due to the pandemic.

Who is your favorite biographer or what is your favorite biography?

My favorite biography is the one of my husband, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War* by Ramsey and [Stephen] Rivele, published in 1990. Not only did it show me the true character of my husband, Colonel Edwin P. Ramsey, 26th Cavalry (Philippine Scouts), but also how he overcame his challenges as he fought for four years in World War II in the Philippines. He led the last mounted cavalry charge in U.S. Army history and formed the guerrilla forces that fought behind enemy lines. I saw the man I loved and the man I honored as he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on June 28, 2013. It was the saddest day of my life but the proudest, too.

I was executive producer of the documentary by Vanilla Fire Productions, *Never Surrender: The Ed Ramsey Story*, which premiered in 2016 at the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles.

What have been your most satisfying moments as a biographer?

My most satisfying moment as a biographer was the discovery phase. In the case of my sister-in-law, Nadine Ramsey, who passed away in 1997, my husband asked me to write her biography because he said “she had more guts than I ever did.” I could not believe that, but I trusted his words, and having only photographs, I embarked on a massive search for documents in the Military National Archives. Then, when the Smithsonian sent me the photo of her as the first woman to join the Bendix Race, and when *Life* magazine sent me the Peter Stackpole Collection of photographs of her (as well as the back cover of the 1946 international edition), I discovered what an amazing woman she truly was—my husband was right.

Having made a promise to my husband, I wanted to make sure I completed the project. It took having determination, perseverance, and being open to anything that came along as I found new leads and discoveries. It also took working well with my co-author, Tricia Aurand, and the rest of my team, like my son Doug Ramsey, who was there for me every step of the way. He knew that I wanted to honor the Ramsey family. He was so helpful as he edited and made constant suggestions on how to proceed. Shelly Kale, who was the editor of Ed’s book, guided us in the production phase and did a lot of research, as well.

What have been your most frustrating moments?

The time spent in research and not locating the documents or people to interview, like some WASPS who knew Nadine but passed away during the three years that I worked on the book with my team. Also, not finding her journals and her flight records; finding photos without dates; and an endless search for her plane, a P-38, which crashed after she had sold it. The owner hoped to have it restored but to no result. False starts and stops in terms of leads—like in an investigation—brought a lot of frustration. And, I was concerned that many of the WASPS (who were in their 90s) would not be around to be interviewed.

If you weren’t a biographer, what dream profession would you be in, and why?

My dream profession, since I was seven years old, was always that of a teacher; so I can say that I lived my dream. I completed 50 years in the profession, retiring from Beverly Hills Unified School District in 2013, having been an English teacher and ESL coordinator in the district for 24 years. It was also the same year my husband passed away.

What genre, besides biography, do you read for pleasure and who are some of your favorite writers?

Having been an English teacher, I taught American and English literature and poetry, as well as research. I loved the poems of Emily Dickinson, the plays and sonnets of Shakespeare, and novels such as *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* and *Farewell to Arms*.