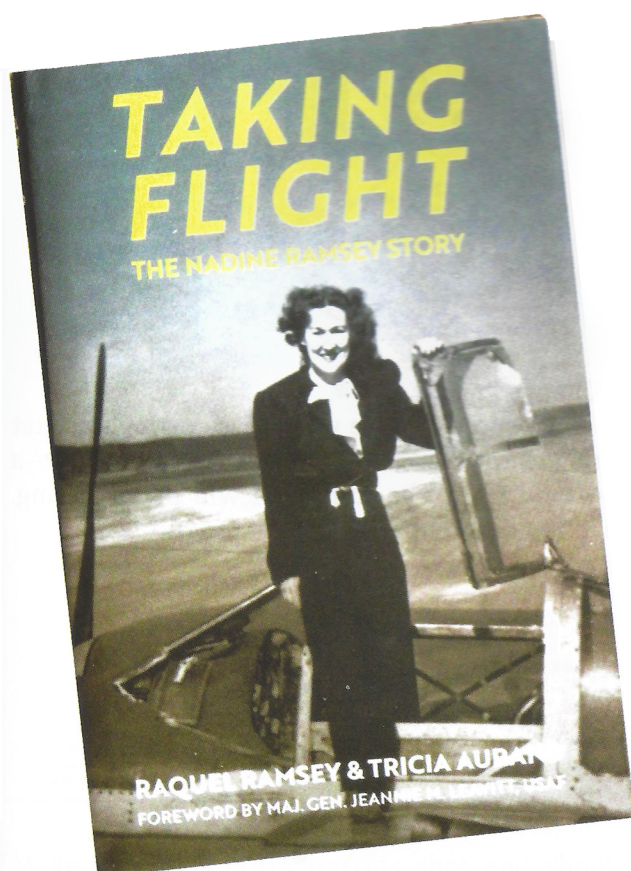


Book Review:



TAKING FLIGHT THE NADINE RAMSEY STORY

These days, when so much history is analyzed through the prism of present social norms and perspectives, it is easy to be misinformed about how and why people and societies evolved. A current trend is to retell the history of the last century using 21st century judgement. It is refreshing, therefore, to read an account in which the facts are accurately portrayed while the themes of change and progress are introduced and reinforced throughout. *Taking Flight - The Nadine Ramsey Story* is one such work. As written by Nadine Ramsey's sister-in-law, Raquel Ramsey, PhD, and co-writer, Tricia Aurand, the book is a biography set against the broader backdrop of the 20th century's most dynamic periods.

Nadine Ramsey was a pioneer female aviator whose commercial and military service career paralleled the young history of aviation itself. While not the most famous of the growing number of women pilots in the early years of flying, she had many "firsts" in her career. More important to Nadine than the accolades of the press were her lifelong passion for flying, her dedication to her

family and service to her country. Born into a sturdy Midwestern family, the early death of her troubled father brought Nadine, her mother and brother closer together; and brought them to the growing aviation hub of Wichita, Kansas. Nadine balanced a traditional life of growing up with pursuit of the unconventional dream of flying. On her own and without her mother's initial approval, she earned a pilot's license, became a flight instructor, aircraft seller and airmail carrier before the age of 30.

As important as these successes were in her life, Nadine was quick to put everything aside to serve her country in World War II. While her brother was writing his own fascinating wartime story fighting in the Philippine Islands, Nadine joined the group of American female civilian pilots organized for domestic wartime duty into what came to be known as the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). Never officially sworn into the military, the female WASPs performed a number of important wartime duties. Nadine was among an exclusive group of these gender-defying pilots, ferrying every type of military aircraft, including high performance pursuit (fighter) planes to destinations in preparation for overseas shipment to the theaters of war.

Nadine found ways to extend her service in the army air forces beyond the official deactivation of the WASPs. Once she returned to mainstream society in Southern California, she continued her passion for flying with her own plane and a variety of postwar civilian aviation jobs. This period of change also reintroduced her to more traditional pursuits, such as family, romance and making a home for herself. Her war hero brother came home, her mother moved closer and she married. Like many women in the changing world of the postwar decades, her life had its ups and downs. The most devastating of these for Nadine was when health problems forced her to give up flying. But she refocused her energies in her later life to reconnecting with her former flying companions, following the long overdue government recognition of the WASPs, and being a dedicated daughter, sister and aunt.

While the book is a biography, the storyline enables the authors to detail many of the historic events of the period; the emergence of women pilots, changing attitudes toward women and the most significant events of a century, chiefly the pivotal events of World War II. The book is professionally researched, with thoroughly footnoted passages from other appropriate literary and historical works and contains many unusual and fascinating photographs. Like flying, family was paramount in Nadine's life and the descriptions of the events in the lives closest to her are both appropriate and satisfying. This book is a worthwhile read, both for the important knowledge gained, and the pure joy of experiencing an extraordinary life.

Jay Wertz