



Name in English: Margaret "Maggie" Gee
Name in Chinese: 朱美娇[朱美嬌]
Name in Pinyin: Zhū Měijiāo
Gender: Female
Birth Year: 1923
Birth Place: Berkeley, California

Pilot, Physicist, Political Activist

Profession (s): Pilot, Physicist, Political Activist

Education: B.S., Physics, University of California at Berkeley; M.S., Math, University of California at Berkeley

Award(s): 1993, inducted along with other Women Airforce Service Pilots into the Women in Aviation International's Pioneer Hall of Fame; 2003, member of "100 Women Who made a Difference" from Women in Aviation International; 2003, member of Aviation's List of 100 Most Influential Women Hall of Fame; 2010, Congressional Gold Medal, Congress of the United States.

Contribution(s): When the United States entered World War II in December 1941, Maggie Gee, who'd just graduated from Berkeley High School in June and started attending UC Berkeley, quit her classes and took a technical drafting job at the Mare Island naval repair facility. When she learned about the Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASP), she pooled all of her savings with other like minded young women to move to Nevada and take flying lessons, in hopes of joining.

With 50 hours of flying time Gee had earned her pilot's wings and was accepted as a WASP, one of only two Chinese Americans (the other pilot was Hazel Ying Lee) in the program. The outfit's main assignment was to transport planes from the factories to stateside airbases for overseas delivery. Gee also co-piloted B-17 bombers through mock dogfights to train bomber gunners. She worked as an instructor at the Las Vegas gunnery school where she trained male pilots in navigational and instrument skills. When WASP was disbanded in 1944, its members were not recognized as military veterans but as civilians. Even WASP pilots killed doing their duty weren't honored with military funerals. It was not until 1977 that WASP members were given veteran status, and in 1979, the Department of the Air Force authorized an honorable discharge for them.

After the war, Maggie Gee returned to UC Berkeley to earn her degree in physics. In 1958, she began working at the University of California's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Her work improving the lab's computing capability allowed the lab to design nuclear warheads for the Navy's Polaris program, the Poseidon missile, as well as the Magnetic Fusion Program. After her retirement in 1988, Gee remained a consultant to the program.

Maggie Gee is also active in politics. She was a member of the 1992 Democratic Party Platform Committee as well as a member of the California State Democratic Party Executive Board and the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee. She has been honored as a past Berkeley Public Works Commissioner, housing advisory commissioner, and board member of the Berkeley Community Fund.

In 2010, Maggie Gee and other surviving members of WASP were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award given by the United States Congress.

“I learned from the flying experience that if there’s something you really want to do, pursue it. I wouldn’t listen to others that say you can’t do it. I would consider it a bigger challenge.”

External Links:

http://asianweek.com/2002_10_04/bay_gee.html

<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123194315>