

Jacqueline Cochran Encyclopedia Article

Jacqueline Cochran

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Jacqueline Cochran

1910?-1980

American aviator who held numerous speed records and in 1935 became the first woman to enter—and win—the Bendix Transcontinental Air Race. Born around 1910 in Pensacola, Florida (training base for American navy pilots), Cochran was orphaned early and reared in poverty by foster parents. Following a series of menial jobs, she ultimately learned to fly in 1932 and married an industrialist/banker named Floyd Odlum. During World War II she was a captain in the British Air Force Auxiliary and headed the women pilots who ferried aircraft all over Europe. When the United States entered the conflict, Cochran was made director of the Women's Air Force Service Pilots. She eventually retired as a full colonel.