

Lady Flyer

Heather B. Moore

Shadow Mountain Publishing (Sep 3, 2024)

Hardcover \$27.99 (416pp)

978-1-63993-295-5

In Heather B. Moore's exciting historical novel *Lady Flyer*, a trailblazing World War II pilot and fierce advocate for women's equality takes a stand that changes women's futures in the military.

Set mainly in the United States during World War II, the story incorporates history, a love story, and the record of women's struggles to break down barriers to full equality. At sixteen, Nancy Harkness's determination to become a professional pilot is sparked by a thrilling barnstorming ride: "She felt separated from her body for a moment. Despite the roar of the engine, it was peaceful in the sky. A quiet stillness." Later, she impresses her instructors with her ability. But obstacles loom: her mother objects to her dreams, and she faces gender bias, institutional opposition to women pilots, sabotage, and a colleague's rivalry.

The steady narrative alternates between the grim realities of the war and warm vignettes that cover Nancy's blossoming romance, married life, and strong friendships with other women pilots. Her conversations with friends and colleagues are natural and unaffected; with her husband, she engages in playful banter too. There's suggestive yet discreet imagery ("He chuckled, a warm sound that seemed to brush against her skin") that reflects the couple's thriving marriage. And Nancy's emotions are palpable throughout: she expresses frustration and stress over military gender bias and grief and anger over the deaths of other women pilots. Indeed, the horrors of war feature large, as does the gender-based discrimination that denied women like Nancy respect, fair pay, and the right to military honors at burial.

In the engaging historical novel *Lady Flyer*, a pioneering pilot helps to end the war and build a more equitable future for women.

KRISTINE MORRIS (September / October 2024)

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