

Esther M. Blake: The First Woman in the Air Force

Esther M. Blake is considered the first woman in the Air Force. She enlisted on July 8, 1948, within the first minute the Air Force was officially authorized to accept women for regular duty.



Blake actually began her Air Force career in 1944, when she joined the Women's Army Corps of the Army Air Forces. She joined the Corps because she had just learned that her eldest Son, a pilot in the AAF, had been shot down while flying over Belgium and was missing. Blake felt that if she could free a soldier from clerical duties to go and fight by taking on those tasks, she might help speed the end of the war.

Blake's sons eventually both returned from combat as decorated soldiers with only minor injuries, but Blake continued her service and worked at many bases throughout the country. She left the AAF briefly to return to work at the Miami Air Depot, where she had been employed before she entered the Women's Corps. Soon after, she heeded a call for women to return to service and shortly thereafter made history by becoming the first official female enlistee when the Air Force was authorized to enlist women for duty.

Blake left the Air Force in 1954 due to a disability and moved on to a job with the U.S. Civil Service at the Veterans Regional Headquarters in Montgomery, Alabama. Blake died in October of 1979.

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From multiple sources