

Mary G. Ross (1908 – 2008)

EARLY LIFE

Born in 1908 in Park Hill, Oklahoma, Mary G. Ross' life was full of Cherokee Culture and History. For example, her teachers were also Cherokee and the college she went to was the site of the Cherokee Female Seminary, which was an educational institution for women west of the Mississippi river.

EDUCATION

At 16 years old, Mary G. Ross started college at Northeastern State Teachers College in Tahlequah and graduated in 1928. She completed graduate work at Colorado State Teachers College between 1923 and 1938. Here she earned her master's degree in mathematics.



CONTRIBUTIONS

In WWII, She joined Lockheed Aircraft Corporation in the Advanced Projects Group, also known as Skunk Works. This group helped improve the design of the P-38 Lightning Fighter Jet. Ross was the only woman on the team besides the secretary.

After WWII, Ross worked on the submarine-launched Polaris missile and the Agena Launch vehicle in the newly formed Lockheed Missiles and Space Company.

UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES

Teaching was a key part in her life's work. This is because teaching was one of the few careers available to women with math and science degrees due to sexist hiring practices

After WWII ended and many women left the workplace, Mary stayed on at Lockheed. She had proven herself to be very valuable. Lockheed sent her to UCLA to study aeronautical engineering. She became the first known Native American woman to be granted a professional certification in engineering.



Ad Astra Per Astra



P-38 Lightning Fighter Jet

FUN FACTS

- ✦ Contributed to NASA's Planetary Flight Handbook, Vol. 3 which detailed flight paths to Mars and Venus
- ✦ After retiring, Ross spent the next 30 years encouraging young Native American women to prepare themselves for careers in math, science, and engineering
- ✦ A painting called Ad Astra Per Astra was made to depict Mary G. Ross and included symbols from Cherokee cosmology