

COURAGEOUS

AFRICAN AMERICANS



by Ron Weber

Aviator Reaches to the Skies

Too often we hear about all the great men of history but not the powerful women who have done so much to change the landscape of our nation's history.

One of these individuals is a black woman named Evie Washington who went on to do what the legendary pilot Bessie Coleman only dreamed of accomplishing: teaching other minority women to fly.

While Coleman's life was cut short in a tragic accident in the 1920s, she left behind a legacy that would be followed by Washington and other women of color.

As a flight orientation pilot for the Civil Air Patrol, Washington devoted time and money to "Opportunity Skyway," an educational

aviation program for children and wrote a children's book on African Americans in aviation.

Washington was born in 1946 and given to her grandparents who raised her on a farm they owned close to the Mississippi border, removed from the poverty of so many other black Americans.

She would rise before school to do the customary chores found on any Southern farm like feeding chickens, milking cows and cleaning the stalls. By the time she and her classmates filed into the classroom, she would have already completed nearly a half a day's hard labor.

As busy city streets across America were crowded in traffic

jams, Washington would only hear or see an occasional car stroll by. However something a lot more exciting than cars visited her on a daily basis. It was the sight and sound of huge C-130 and C-141 airplanes from the nearby military base.

They aircraft flew low over the

fields on take off and landing, as though to wave at the farmers below. Washington watched those planes every time they came by, praying one day they she too would fly like a bird.

Her grandfather supported her every effort to become a pilot, but it was not easy. To break into the field of aviation, she applied for a job as a flight attendant. Unfortunately she would run into a roadblock regarding her small physical size. At a slight 87 pounds she would have to find another way to attain her goal.

Refusing to be defeated she turned to the

military. During the 1960s initiatives focusing on minority hiring became a high priority, especially regarding government jobs or private companies with government contracts.

But when Washington applied to the Air Force Academy, she was abruptly told that the academy was not accepting women pilots.

Knowing in her heart that she could fly an airplane, she refused to give up. She earned the money and paid for flying lessons herself, eventually passing all the tests to get her pilot's license.

Greatly determined,

she went on to break the color barrier in the academic world as well learning a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in business.

In later years, Washington reflected on her drive to pass every roadblock.

"You can learn something from the criticisms and discouragement that people offer you, and at times if you look at in an objective way, it can be a motivating force for you," she said.

During the hardest of times and all the sacrifices she made, some of her fondest memories were the words of encouragement from her grandfather who told her she could have anything a man had if she worked hard enough for it.

He was right.



Evie Washington



A Night of Elegance

Geneva Knauls of northeast Portland celebrates a Night of Elegance with her husband, Paul, during a salute to her longtime work in the community as a hair stylist and barber as well as mentor and counselor. The formal affair was held at the Tiffany Center last month and was sponsored by Millennium Group 2000. PHOTO BY ANTONIO HARRIS

Dear Deanna!

I'm coming clean with my conscience and need to tell my husband that I don't love him anymore. We've been married for a few years but I want to be single again. I want to come and go as I please, keep all my money to myself and not have to cook and clean. I'm simply tired of being married and there's no one else involved. How do I tell my husband it's over? --Anonymous; Philadelphia

Dear Anonymous:

Your husband was born at night, it just wasn't last night. There's something else to this story because like a light switch, love can't be switched on and off. I suggest you pull away from your advising girlfriends who you haven't mentioned, but they're in the mix. Seek a solution by talking with your husband about your true feelings, emotions and desires. Honesty may open the door and who knows, your husband may see you as a smelly rose.

Dear Deanna!

I get annoyed when my wife sits around gossiping. Every time she gets with her girlfriends, they chatter and talk about people. These girls aren't of any value to her because when they re-tell the story, my wife is the one who ends up looking bad. They twist the story as if she said everything and arguments and a lot of drama gets started. How do I tell my wife this needs to stop because it's affecting our relationship? --James; Pasadena, Calif.

Dear James:

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to tell your wife that gossip is bad and evil. There are at least five or more Bible verses in Proverbs that teach about gossip. You should hit your wife in the head hard and fast with Proverbs Chapter 11 Verse 13 which says that a gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy



Ask Deanna!
Real People, Real Advice
An advice column known for its fearless approach to reality based subjects!

man keeps a secret. That's more than enough wisdom to explain why her friends throw her under the bus when she runs her mouth.

Dear Deanna!

I'm a single lady that adopted a child. I feel guilty because I didn't realize it would be so much work. My family and I parted over this decision because they said it would be too much to handle. I love my adopted son but now I want a relationship, marriage and children of my own. Are there any resources available to keep me from taking my frustrations out on my son? --Missy; Charleston, S.C.

Dear Missy:

Regardless of how they get here, children require love, patience and commitment of which you have very little. Your family knew what they were talking about but, no, you were hard headed and now you're suffering from your decision. You need to get yourself together before thinking beyond your current situation. Seek professional counseling for yourself and visit www.adopting.org for adoption resources and assistance.

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