



Homefront Heroes

Tiffany Miller '00 is bringing recognition to a forgotten group of women veterans.

Tiffany Miller '00 knows what her late grandmother, the matriarch of the family, wanted done with her ashes. Elaine Danforth Harmon had clearly spelled out her wishes on a handwritten note found in a fireproof box after her death in April 2015: she wanted them placed at Arlington National Cemetery.

A year later, Miller and her family continue to fight to have that request granted for her maternal grandmother, who'd been a member of the WASPs (Women Airforce Service Pilots) during World War II. At the time of Harmon's death, Miller's family

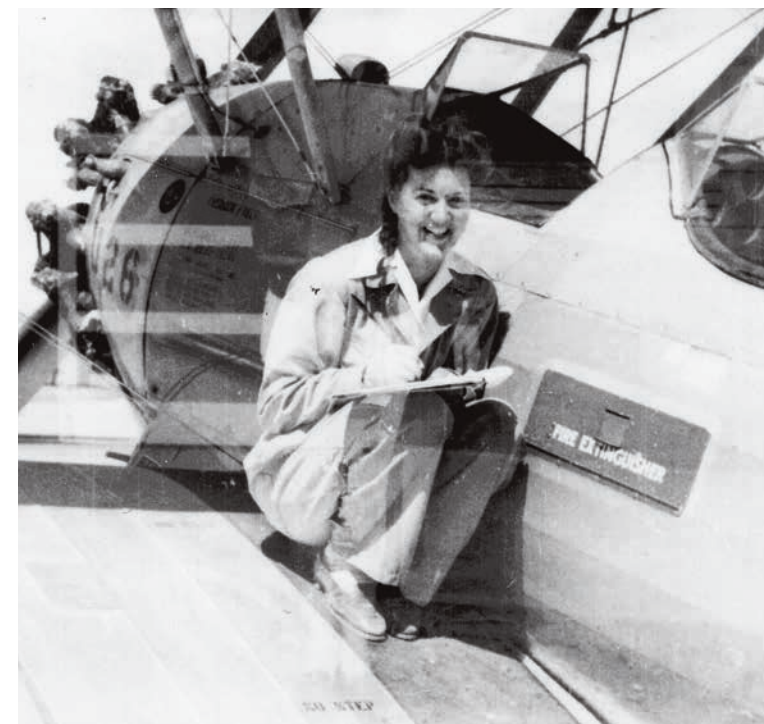
PREPARING FOR FINAL LANDING: Miller is seeking to overturn a ruling that prohibits World War II Women Airforce Service Pilots—known as WASPs—from interment at Arlington National Cemetery.

was unaware that only a month before, the Army, which has jurisdiction over the cemetery, had ruled WASPs ineligible for interment at Arlington.

To Miller, it was the latest in a history of slights against the 1,074 women pilots who transported military planes, towed targets for live ammunition training, and trained male pilots to fly.

"My grandmother used to say that the WASPs were forgotten about for 30 years, and that has stuck with me," says Miller.

During and after the war, WASPs were considered civilians. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter signed a law granting WASPs military veteran status in the first public recognition of the pilots since the end of World War II. In 2002, a military directive made WASPs eligible for interment at Arlington with military honors.



Early in 2015, following a legal review of the 2002 rule, then Secretary of the Army John McHugh announced that the Army would reverse that policy.

Miller has been a leader in a national campaign to get the Army to restore the eligibility of WASPs for interment at Arlington. It's led to interviews in the *New York Times* and other national media, a Change.org petition with more than 170,000 signatures—and even legislation on behalf of the pilots.

In a public statement released in January, an Army spokesman said that the 2002 rule had come from the Department of Veterans Affairs, which has no authority over the Arlington National Cemetery. Arlington's "eligibility criteria are far more stringent" than those of other military cemeteries, he said, "due to space limitations."

HIGH FLYERS: In recognition of her service during World War II (top, in 1944), Miller's grandmother, Elaine Harmon (above at left), and other members of the WASPs in 2009 were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal by President Barack Obama.

But Miller's efforts are paying off, with political support and public opinion overwhelmingly on the side of the WASPs. On March 22, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Women Airforce Service Pilot Arlington Inurnment Restoration Act, which directs the Army to ensure that the cremated remains of WASPs are eligible for interment in Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors. It passed 385-0.

"It's just totally incredible and unexpected," says Miller, who lives in the San Francisco Bay area and has been working toward such a result with her older sister, Erin, a lawyer, and younger sister, Whitney, a former lobbyist. A similar bill has been introduced in the Senate.

For Miller, the battle to move her grandmother's ashes from her mother's bedroom closet to the nation's most hallowed ground is meaningful on multiple levels. A women's studies major at Rochester, she was also president of the Women's Caucus (now called College Feminists). During her tenure, she organized a panel discussion about women and war, in which her grandmother—and her mother, who worked for the American Red Cross in Vietnam—participated. She says WASPs are still all but unknown. "People know about the Tuskegee Airmen because of Steven Spielberg, but not many people know about the WASPs," she says. "When I tell people about them, they say, 'Really? Women flew in the war?'"

To change that, Miller, with a background in project management, gives media interviews, attends press conferences, checks comments posted on her petition, and scours the Internet every day for the latest news stories about the legislation, introduced by Rep. Martha McSally of Arizona, the Air Force's first female fighter pilot to fly in combat.

Miller's sister, Erin Miller, says Tiffany has always been "very tenacious."

"She's always been the kind of person who sees something that's wrong and then immediately wants to do anything she can to make it right."

Tiffany Miller is as firmly dedicated to women's equality as she was in college. "She's always sending [Whitney and me] *New York Times* articles about the injustices in the world, especially when it comes to women's issues," Erin adds. "That's always something that's at the front of her mind."

Tiffany is especially proud of the Congressional Gold Medal that Harmon received from President Barack Obama in 2009. Shortly after returning from the White House, Harmon donated the medal to the College Park Aviation Museum in Maryland, where she lived.

"It wasn't about her," Miller says. "She wanted people to know who the WASPs were, that they did something for this country."

Even more reason to get closure for herself, her family, and her grandmother, who died at 95 and was inducted into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame on April 7.

"There's just no way it would be satisfying for anybody in my family to have a funeral somewhere else," she says. "We'd feel as if we let her down, that we'd let the WASPs down. Knowing my grandmother, she wouldn't have taken no for an answer. We have to make this happen." 🗣️

—ROBIN L. FLANIGAN

Paper Dressmaker

Paper art is thousands of years old, and artists working in the medium have melded the material into a surprising array of three-dimensional creations.


Such as dresses. You may not want to wear a paper dress to a gala, but you may want to examine one up close as part of an art exhibition.

This spring, Peruvian paper artist **Roxana Ramos '11** exhibits one of her paper dresses as part of the 20th Jeonju Hanji Culture Festival in Jeonju, South Korea. "Hanji" means "paper of Korea."

"Paper dresses are a very approachable way for visitors to explore with art," says Ramos. Paper is a familiar material that most visitors handle in multiple ways in their daily lives. "It helps people to see that design is more approachable than what they might think."

Based in Peru's capital city, Lima, Ramos has been a versatile paper artist since her time as a studio arts major at Rochester. In addition to teaching at Lima's Toulouse Lautrec Design Institute, Ramos founded Lettra, a paper art and bookbinding "laboratory," as she calls it, evoking the creative experimentation at the heart of her work. Her paper products are wide-ranging, with a focus on books that serve as art objects, constructed out of a variety of papers, ribbon, and incorporating materials from beeswax to chili powder.

In the past year, Ramos has exhibited at two other major international events: the Sofia Paper Art Fest in Sofia, Bulgaria, and the Biennial Internationale des Arts des Fibre et du Papier in the United Kingdom.

Ramos says two themes she explores in her art are fragility and strength. And paper is a perfect medium to deepen that exploration. "There will be a point in time where my pieces will only exist in photographs or documentation," she writes in her artist statement on her website at Roxanaramos.com. "This is the main part of their magic." 

—KAREN MCCALLY '02 (PHD)

PLEATS OF PAPER: Dresses are among the diverse array of art objects that Roxana Ramos '11 creates from paper. An artist who exhibits globally, she first showed her work on the River Campus. Her senior thesis exhibition, *Narrative Threads*, was displayed in the Art and Music Library.



COURTESY OF ROXANA RAMOS '11

Elements of the Perfect Cup

Day explains, in order of importance, the elements of optimal coffee.



2

The perfect ground.

Particle size is "incredibly important," says Day.

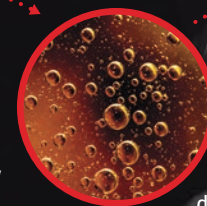
"Assuming you have fresh coffee and good water, the most important thing is getting the particle size of the grind exactly right." The process can be difficult, because the "right size" will vary according to preparation method. That's a major reason why Perfect Coffee was preground. This summer, Blue Bottle plans to unveil Blue Bottle Perfectly Ground Coffee.



1

Quality ingredients.

Not surprisingly, the basic ingredients—coffee beans and water—are key. But that's just the beginning, according to Day.



3

A precise ratio of coffee to water.

How did Day determine the optimal ratio?

As in the case of step 2, through persistent experimentation, with results recorded and analyzed with an approach "similar to what we use in very sophisticated statistical or economic analyses," he says. "It's modern big data science applied to coffee, basically."



4

Brewing time.

While brewing time is a basic element, Day

notes that "the way that the coffee interacts with the water is less than 50 percent of the problem" of making perfect coffee.

5

Temperature and pressure.

While temperature and pressure are basic elements, they are the least important. What does this mean if you're considering the purchase of a fancy home brewing system? You may get less value for your money than you think, according to Day. "You can use our packets in a \$20 Mr. Coffee and it will taste way better" than coffee that's improperly ground and measured, he says.

—KAREN MCCALLY '02 (PHD)



Big Data Coffee

A generation ago, the Seattle roaster Starbucks remade the American coffee-drinking experience, grinding beans right before the eyes of café customers and producing from this raw material a startling array of coffee drinks. According to **Neil Day '90**, Starbucks ushered in the "second wave" of coffee culture in America. But today, he says, the now ubiquitous chain is two waves behind.

Day is a Silicon Valley technologist and the founder of Perfect Coffee, an artisanal coffee company that achieved something coffee connoisseurs recently thought impossible: making preground, single-serve coffee packets that produced coffee rivaling in quality the best freshly ground varieties. If artisanal coffee—farm-to-table, hand-roasted, and made in partnership with highly vetted growers—was the third wave, artisanal coffee that is easy to prepare at home is the fourth, says Day.

"It was a very analog thing in a very digital life," he says of the first artisanal coffee he tasted in Portland, Oregon, in the early days of the third wave. Coffee soon became, he says, "a very serious hobby."


Day started his career at Apple, and in 1999 founded one of the first e-commerce sites, HomeWarehouse.com, which was later purchased by Walmart. He went on to serve as the chief

technology officer of Sears, then Shutterfly.

He observed the way in which technology was transforming everyday life, but had made little impact on coffee. The best quality coffee was fussy and complicated to prepare, and available only in select cafes with experienced baristas and long lines of customers. The goal of Perfect Coffee "was really just, at the end of the day, figuring out how to apply analytic and scientific tools to making fantastic coffee really accessible to people," he says.

Day ran subscription-based Perfect Coffee for just two years before third-wave stalwart Blue Bottle Coffee bought it in the spring of 2015. Day is now Blue Bottle's principal of coffee technologies.

So how did Day achieve the perfect preground cup? First, by identifying the key components of optimal coffee, and second, by delivering the most important of those components in each single packet.

But while he's stressed convenience and accessibility in his business, Day continues to brew coffee from scratch at home. "I totally admit that I'm kind of ridiculous," he says. "I make espresso pretty much every morning, and I may actually make two or three cups on the way to the one cup that I actually drink." 

—KAREN MCCALLY '02 (PHD)

STEVE BOERNER (ILLUSTRATION); ADOBE STOCK (IMAGES)

Building a High-Tech Habitat

Among the regular features of Forbes magazine is a column by journalist Bruce Rogers, the “chief insights officer” of the publication, who profiles influential thought leaders. Last March, Rogers put the spotlight on **Jeff Fagnan** '98S (MBA), founder and general partner of the early-stage venture capital firm Accomplice.

Fagnan formed Accomplice with three other partners from his previous job at Atlas Ventures. The new Boston-area firm invests only in local start-ups, with the goal of building a new “ecosystem” of tech start-ups in the Boston region.

Fagnan, who grew up in economically downtrodden rural Oregon, told Rogers that Accomplice is intended to be “a different type of a venture capital firm.”

“We knew we wanted to harness community,” he said. “We wanted everyone to believe that entrepreneurship and innovation are the lifelines and the lifeblood of society, especially Western society, and we need to do everything we can to promote and foster them.”

Tarah Mitchell '07: Excellent in All She Does

The core value of the U.S. Air Force is “Excellent in All We Do.” **Tarah Mitchell** '07 is a living reflection of that value in at least two wholly separate domains.

The Air Force financial analyst based in Little Rock, Arkansas, has been a professional athlete in the International Federation of Body Building since 2013. In March, Mitchell placed in the top 10 in the international, invitation-only Arnold Classic Women's Physique competition.

The event, in which Mitchell placed eighth among 54 elite women bodybuilders, was part of a multisport festival in Columbus,



GOING LOCAL: Fagnan's venture capital firm is making an impact in Boston through its exclusive commitment to local start-ups.



MULTIDISCIPLINED: Mitchell, who oversees multimillion-dollar budgets as an Air Force officer, doubles as an elite bodybuilder.

Ohio, which attracted thousands of athletes from more than 70 nations.

During her long period of training for the event, Mitchell was deployed to the East African nation of Djibouti, where she served as comptroller, overseeing a \$3.5 million budget for the special operations forces charged with combatting violent extremist organizations in the region.

A Pivotal Post

Kevin McDonald '14W (EdD) has been named the chief diversity officer of one of the nation's most closely scrutinized university systems: the University of Missouri.

The University of Missouri's flagship campus in Columbia was embroiled in protest and controversy last fall over racial incidents. Tim Wolfe, the president of the University of Missouri system, announced his resignation in November.

McDonald, who begins his term on June 1, will be the university system's first diversity officer. Prior to accepting the Missouri post, McDonald was vice president and associate provost for diversity and inclusion at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Before that, he served in a similar role at Virginia Tech.

Political Scientist Named Chicago Provost

Daniel Diermeier '95 (PhD) has been named provost of the University of Chicago. His term begins July 1.

Diermeier is dean of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy as well as the Emmett Dedmon Professor of Administration. He has taught at both Stanford and Northwestern business schools, and is the author most recently of *Reputation Rules: Strategies for Building Your Company's Most Valuable Asset* (McGraw-Hill).

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