



AIRWOMEN OF THE RED STAR - SOVIET COMBAT VETERANS OF WWII



Saturday, June 18th — 2pm

The San Diego Aerospace Museum is honored to announce a truly historical event: **Airwomen of the Red Star – Soviet Combat Veterans of WWII.** Five WWII veterans representing three Soviet air regiments will be traveling to America to share their stories. Largely unknown outside the former Soviet Union, these veterans will not only give a unique Russian perspective on WWII, but also that of some of the world's first female combat flight and ground crew members.

Flying the Yak-1, the 586th Air Defense Fighter Regiment of the Soviet Air Force escorted aircraft and guarded key targets against enemy bombers. A single-seat fighter with a 1,100 hp engine, the Yak-1 had a top speed of 400 mph. Senior Mechanic Ekaterina Kuz'minichna Polunina, today the Regiment's historian, will represent the 586th, along with Squadron Commander Tamara Ustinovna Pamyatnykh. Awarded the Soviet Order of the Red Star, Pamyatnykh was also presented with a gold watch by the King of England for her heroics.



Ekaterina Kuz'minichna Polunina



Galina Pavlovna Brok-Bel'tsova

Wulf attack survivor **Galina Pavlovna Brok-Bel'tsova** and Armament Mechanic **Anna Ivanovna Kirilina**. Considered one of the most complex Soviet-made aircraft of the time, the Pe-2 was a twin-engine, twin tail dive bomber. With a top speed of 336 mph, it carried a crew of three and a 1,000 kg bomb load.



Anna Ivanovna Kirilina



★ Admission for Museum members is \$15 and active military (with ID required at the door).

★ General public \$25.

★ Students 17 and under are admitted free.



Represented by Squadron Commander **Nadezhda Vasil'evna Popova**, the 46th Guards Bomber Regiment flew the obsolete Polikarpov Po-2, a wooden open-cockpit biplane. Known as the "Night Witches," the squadron flew close to the front lines, making nighttime bombing raids against tactical targets like bridges, ammunition dumps and fuel depots. Though operating under cover of darkness provided the crew some protection, it also made missions that much more challenging - and cold. Popova flew 852 combat missions, was shot down several times, and became a Hero of the Soviet Union.



Nadezhda Vasil'evna Popova



Tamara Ustinovna Pamyatnykh

"On one combat mission with Raisa Sumachevskaya as my wingman, we were assigned to intercept and shoot down a German reconnaissance aircraft. We soon saw not one but two formations of German bombers totaling forty-two planes. We climbed until our altitude was well above them and dove down firing at the lead aircraft of the formation. Each of us shot down one bomber on our first pass through their formation. Then we turned and approached the formation again and shot down two more bombers. By that time my guns were empty, so I decided to ram one of their bombers with my aircraft. I came so close to the enemy that I could see the face of the pilot. He was a huge man with a very fierce face. was about to ram him when my plane was hit with gunfire, the wing separated from the aircraft, and I fell into a spin."

Senior Lieutenant Tamara Pamyatnykh As quoted in *A Dance With Death: Soviet Airwomen in World War II.*

Thanks to private donations, personal connections, and the unwavering commitment of local businesswoman **Jill Gernetzke-Hays**, this incredible event is being brought to San Diego. As we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, come hear fascinating firsthand accounts from these history-making women. It promises to be a once-in-a-lifetime event.



Moderating this special event is **Dr. Kazimiera J. Cottam**, a premiere historian of Russian women and their involvement in WWII. Two of her most popular titles, *Women in War and Resistance* and *Women in Air War* will be available for purchase. Dr. Cottam and **Anne Noggle**, former WASP and author of *A Dance with Death*, will both be available for book signing. The striking veterans portraits featured in *A Dance with Death* will be available for viewing



★ A silent auction of autographed models will be conducted at the event. These models will represent the aircraft that were flown and maintained by the women.

★ To reserve tickets, call the San Diego Aerospace Museum Education Department (619) 234-8291 ext. 19 .

★ To donate towards this event, contact Mayra Rael, Museum Events Manager at: (619) 234-8291 ext 54

or send your donation: Attention Mayra Rael (Museum Events Dept.) San Diego Aerospace Museum 2001 Pan American Plaza San Diego CA 92101

