

Our Scout Programs are co-ed and fully nondiscriminatory. We support the efforts of our Scouts who are girls as well as the efforts of our Scouts who are boys. We appreciate our Scouts live in the present while looking toward the future with a glimpse of the past. We also like to share the stories of lesser known American heroes: such as the Mercury 13.

The year was 1963, and the former U.S.S.R was in a “space race” with America, a race they seemed to be winning. Russia had the first space vehicle to orbit earth, the first person in space, the first person to orbit earth, and the first person to spacewalk. Now they were about to achieve another first – the first woman in space.

For every victory of the former U.S.S.R., America surged forward, to meet and then surpass their achievements. While most realize men were being trained as astronauts to be among the first Americans in space. But few know that at the same time, the Mercury 13 women were being trained to go into space.

Twenty five women qualified for the astronaut

program. Many of them were among the top aviators in the world. The list was whittled down to thirteen women. These women went through identical physical and psychological tests of the men of Mercury 7. The only one to finish all 3 phases of testing was Jerri Cobb. Jerri Cobb was not a mission specialist; she was a pilot! She was a test pilot for North American Aviation and went on to best 4 altitude levels! However, due to social attitudes at the time, neither Ms. Cobb nor any of the other women were sent into space.

It would be another 20 years before our country's first woman astronaut, Dr. Sally Ride, went into space as a Mission Specialist, and it would be another 12 years after that before Col. Eileen Collins became the first woman pilot in space. Four years after that, Col. Collins became the first woman Mission Commander.

The Mercury 13 women will always have the knowledge that they completed the same tests as the Mercury 7 men. But we thought they deserved more than that. They deserve to be identified as the American heroes they are. As one of the first steps

in getting women into space, we appreciate their efforts. And while they may have not gotten the chance to go into space themselves, we honor their contribution. They paved the way all the way to the stars for all women.