



ARTICLE: Cornelia Fort

Introduction

Cornelia lived a life of adventure in her 24 short years. Born in 1919, one year after the end of World War I in 1918, Cornelia grew up in Nashville, Tennessee. She had three older brothers and one younger sister. After earning a two-year diploma in 1939 from Sarah Lawrence College, she returned home. In 1940 after taking a ride in an airplane with a friend, she found her future in the skies. She earned her private pilot’s license, then her commercial license and quickly became certified as a flight instructor. After a brief move to Fort Collins, Colorado where she was hired as a flight instructor, she was offered a job in Honolulu, Hawaii to teach sailors and defense workers to fly. After a stop in San Francisco, she moved to Hawaii in September 1941. On Dec. 7, 1941, she was flying an Interstate Cadet (a two-seater training airplane) with a student in the front. She grabbed the controls to evade being hit by a Japanese aircraft, the start of the Japanese attack on the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor.

In September 1942, Cornelia was accepted into the Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) based in Wilmington, Delaware. In March 1943, Cornelia was killed in an airplane accident over Texas as she was delivering a military plane to Love Field in Dallas. She was 24 and the first woman pilot to be killed in service to the country.

Learning Activities

A. Read the [Article on Cornelia Fort](#) and study the attached Timeline. Answer the following questions:

1. Where was Cornelia living when Nazi Germany invaded Poland to begin World War II in Europe?

2. What was Cornelia doing in May 1940 when Hitler and Nazi Germany invaded many countries in western Europe?

B. **On the attached map, circle the following locations, which are key spots in Cornelia’s life.**

1. Nashville, Tennessee
2. New York City
3. Fort Collins, Colorado
4. Honolulu, Hawaii
5. Wilmington, Delaware

C. **Calculate the distance, in miles, between the following locations: ***

Use the scale on the map to estimate the distance (closest 100 miles if possible) between cities.

1. Nashville to New York City: _____

2. Nashville to Fort Collins, Colorado: _____

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

- 3. Fort Collins to San Francisco: _____
- 4. San Francisco to Honolulu, Hawaii: _____
- 5. Nashville to Wilmington, Delaware: _____
- 6. Long Beach, California to Dallas, Texas: _____

D. Inquiry Questions

1. Put yourself in the cockpit as a student pilot in the Interstate Cadet on Dec. 7, 1941 in Honolulu. What do you think prepared Cornelia for the action she quickly took to land safely?

2. Why did it take courage and determination for Cornelia to pursue a career as a pilot? In other words, what were some of the obstacles she faced?

3. As one of the original female pilots working for the WAFS within the U.S. Army Air Forces, Cornelia was a trailblazer. In 1943, the WAFS merged with another entity to form the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). From more than 25,000 women who applied, 1,102 women became WASP. Remember the time was the early 1940s. All of these women were trailblazers. What did these women have in common? In other words, what did it take for these women to succeed as pilots capable of flying military planes?

* Please use the map's scale and a ruler to determine approximate distances. Then if you have access to the Internet, the USGS (United States Geological Survey) has a tool to determine straight line distances at this website:

<https://apps.nationalmap.gov/viewer/>

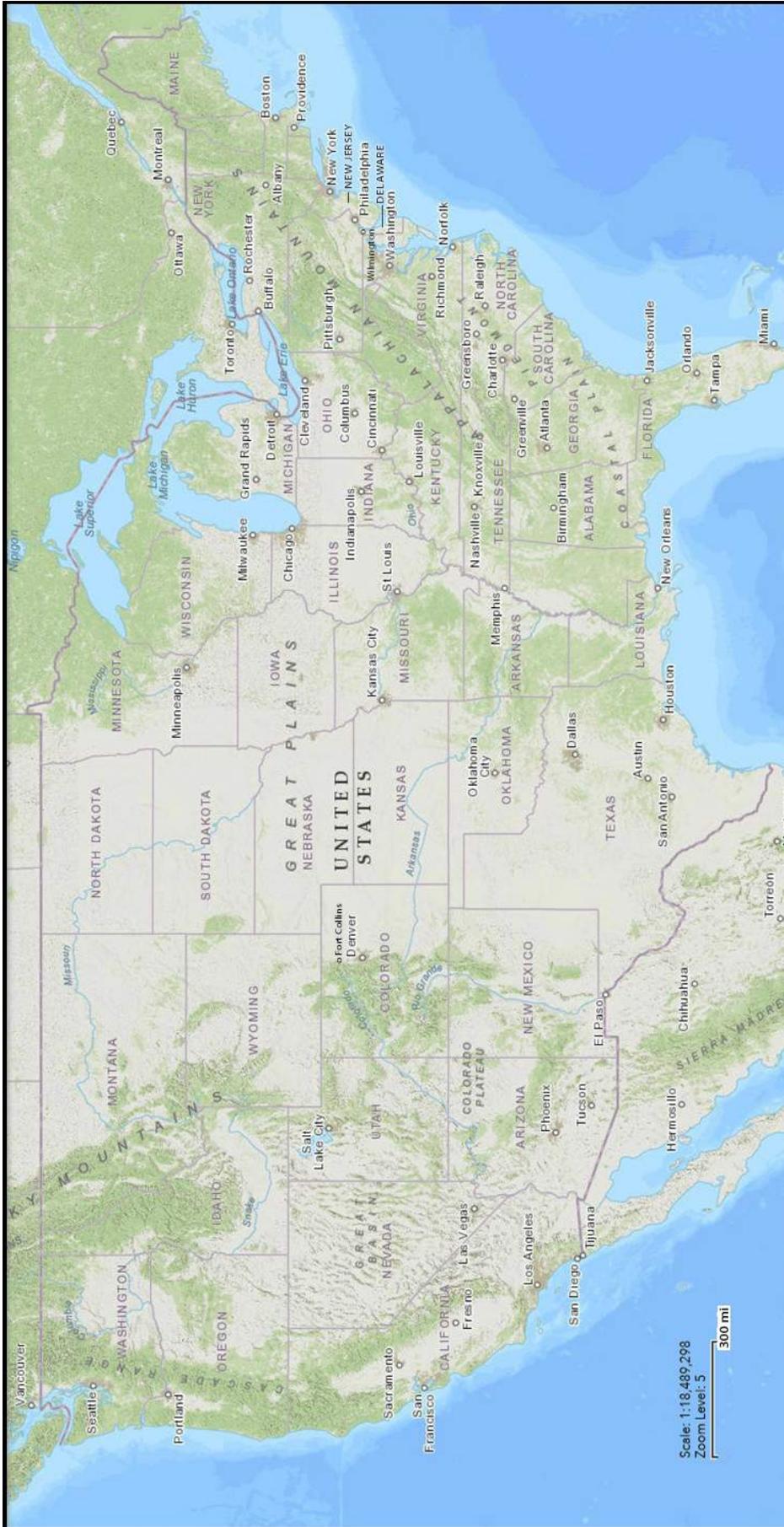


Find and use this measurement tool that you will find on the website to place points on the map and determine the distance to check your work.

Name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____



Scale: 1:18,489,298
Zoom Level: 5
300 mi

U.S. Map

Measure scale and use the dimension to determine distances between cities either by marking out intervals or by calculation (ratio of total measured distances between points of interest and scale measurement for 300 miles).



Scale is same for both maps.
Map between mainland U.S. and Hawaii is rotated from actual orientation



TIMELINE: Cornelia Fort, WASP, and World War II

