

**No Limits**  
**By ROSALYE SETTLES**  
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Never give up — no matter what. That's the spirit infusing "Women and Flight," a traveling exhibition now at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum. "Women and Flight" presents profiles on 37 female aviators and astronauts whose determination is expanding the presence of women in the sky and in space.

Carolyn J. Russo, museum staff photographer, undertook the project "to provide role models for young women and to show the diversity of careers available in aviation and space exploration," she says. She traveled the country to interview and photograph the women.

Currently only 6 percent of all pilots are women. Once considered second-rate aviators, women now fly equipment ranging from gliders to the NASA space shuttle. Some of the women profiled entered aviation by choice and others by accident. All of them, however, share the same goal — to fly.

A photograph of Amelia Earhart serves as a prelude to Russo's vivid portraits, which use each pilot's work-setting as a backdrop. This type of background provides a seamless quality to the portraits, showing the interrelatedness of each pilot and her environment. Accompanied by quotations and biographical sketches, each photograph reveals the inner person as well the exterior persona captured by the camera.

As you look at one photograph, you can almost feel the frustration of 87-year-old Doris Lockness, who says that "back in 1939 it was always a toss up whether to drop quarters into the meter which ran [my] refrigerator or use the money to fly."

Viewing the image of Marsha Ivins, NASA mission specialist, it is not difficult to imagine the sense of accomplishment she must have felt when she was finally admitted to the U.S. space program. She applied three times before she was accepted, and she is now the veteran of four space flights. We can only be impressed by the confident spirit of women such as Ida Van Smith-Dunn, who knew that "somewhere along the line, if she continued to be interested, she would learn to fly," Russo writes. And she did — at age 50.

Through the lives of the women Russo has profiled, we see that we can make the seemingly impossible a reality. It's the strength and depth of our determination that matter. The only limitations are those we impose on ourselves. The sky is no longer the limit.

The exhibit, with its companion book by Russo, begins a five-year, 30-city tour this fall after the Smithsonian exhibit closes in September.

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