

## **RODRÍGUEZ MCLEAN, VERNEDA (1918–1982)**

On August 4, 1944, as the Second World War continued to dominate newspaper headlines, a group of seventy eight women graduated from a Sweetwater, Texas, army pilot training program. Verneda Rodríguez McLean was among the group and on this day became one of the now legendary Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASP). Her tour of duty took her to Moore Field in Mission, Texas. The task assigned to the WASPs was extremely dangerous and the women chosen to serve as WASPs numbered among the best qualified. Their job was to fly tow target missions so that gunnery recruits could practice their skills on the field. The WASPs also ferried planes from the factories to the airfield. When the army terminated the WASP division women were expected to return to their previous lives without any of the provisions provided for other military personnel. Although she went on to marry, raise a family, and work in a variety of other positions, Rodríguez McLean successfully fought for recognition of the women's service and the benefits entitled to them. She died in 1982, and may be the first woman WASP to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery.