

# FLIGHT LINES

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# RED TAILS

COURAGE HAS NO COLOR





# BLACK HISTORY MONTH



## THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN DIORAMA AT THE SMF

In the summer of 2008, the Southern Museum of Flight proudly unveiled its Tuskegee Airmen Exhibit, a tribute to the accomplishments of the first African-American military airmen in the United States Army Air Corps during World War II. This diorama dedicated to the famed Tuskegee Airmen, provides a spotlight shining down on a significant period of American history. This tribute highlights an extraordinary group of men who continue to provide inspiration for anyone who dares to dream.

Tuskegee Airmen refers to all who were involved in the so-called "Tuskegee Experiment," the Army Air Corps program to train African-Americans to fly and maintain combat aircraft. The Tuskegee Airmen included pilots, navigators, bombardiers, maintenance and support staff, instructors, and all the personnel who kept the planes in the air.

The military selected Tuskegee Institute to train pilots because of its commitment to aeronautical training. Tuskegee had the facilities, and engineering and technical instructors, as well as a climate for year round flying.

The first Civilian Pilot Training Program students completed their instruction in May 1940. The Tuskegee program was then expanded and became the center for African-American aviation during World War II. Tuskegee Airmen overcame segregation and prejudice to become one of the most highly respected fighter groups of World War II. They proved conclusively that African-Americans could fly and maintain sophisticated combat aircraft.



The Tuskegee Airmen's achievements, together with the men and women who supported them, paved the way for full integration of the U.S. military.

In 1945, at the end of World War II, African-Americans assumed a more active role in aviation. A number of talented pilots entered the world of general aviation. In time, black pilots also made their way into commercial aviation. Black military pilots made significant contributions to both the Korean and Vietnam wars. With the advent of the space program, African-Americans finally made their way into the astronaut corps, serving in a variety of technical and flying roles.

Today, African-American men and women occupy some of NASA's highest ranks, and there are twenty-one black astronauts. Of these, fourteen have traveled into space. As was the case with other segregated institutions, change required political pressure from the highest levels, the brilliance and indispensable talents of African-American soldiers and researchers—and a lot of time.

The appointment of astronaut Charles Bolden as the head of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) became an important benchmark in the ever-expanding role of African-Americans in aerospace.



The dedication, determination, and passion of the Tuskegee Airmen carries on today and was a major goal of the museum's diorama that honors the Airmen's unique personal and military contributions.

# ALABAMA & THE AIRMEN



## THE ALABAMA ROSTER OF TUSKEGEE AIRMEN PILOTS

NAME	RANK	HOMETOWN
Allen, Clarence W.	2nd Lt	Mobile
Bickham, Luzine B.	Flight Officer	Tuskegee Inst.
Campbell, William A.	2nd Lt	Tuskegee
Casey, Clifton G.	Flight Officer	Birmingham
Daniels, Thomas J., III	Flight Officer	Wetumpka
Davis, Benjamin O., Jr.	Capt	Tuskegee
Dunn, Charles	2nd Lt	Dallas County
Edwards, William H.	Flight Officer	Birmingham
Goodenough, Purnell J.	2nd Lt	Birmingham
Gordon, William M.	2nd Lt	Mobile
Gray, Elliott H.	Flight Officer	Tuskegee Inst.
Griffin, William E.	2nd Lt	Birmingham
Hall, Leander A., Jr.	2nd Lt	Mobile
Harris, Richard H.	2nd Lt	Montgomery
Johnson, Theopolis W.	2nd Lt	Carbon Hill
Kenney, Oscar A.	2nd Lt	Tuskegee Inst.
King, Earl E.	2nd Lt	Bessemer
Laird, Edward	2nd Lt	Brighton
Lane, Allen G.	2nd Lt	Demopolis
Leftwich, Ivey L.	2nd Lt	Fairfield
Macon, Richard D.	2nd Lt	Birmingham
Matthews, Samuel	Flight Officer	Birmingham
Merriweather, Robert	Flight Officer	Birmingham
Mitchell, James T., Jr.	Flight Officer	Gadston
Nightingale, Elton H.	2nd Lt	Tuskegee Inst.
Oliver, Luther L.	2nd Lt	Montgomery
Prowell, John H.	2nd Lt	Lewisburg
Roberts, Leon C.	2nd Lt	Prichard
Robinson, Isaiah E., Jr.	2nd Lt	Birmingham
Rogers, Amos A.	Flight Officer	Tuskegee Inst.
Stephens, Charles W.	Flight Officer	Monroeville
Sanders, Pearlee E.	2nd Lt	Bessemer
Temple, Alva N.	2nd Lt	Carrollton
White, Sherman W.	2nd Lt	Montgomery
Williams, Clarence	Flight Officer	Fairfield



## TUSKEGEE AIRMEN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

The site at Moton Field in Tuskegee, Alabama, commemorates the contributions of African-American airmen in World War II. Moton Field was the home of primary flight training for these pioneering pilots and is operated by the National Park Service to interpret their history. Constructed between 1940-1942 as a new training base, the field was named after the former Tuskegee Institute principal, Robert Russa Moton, who died the previous year.



It was in March 1941, Ms. Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, visited

Kennedy Field in the Tuskegee area and was taken up in an aircraft piloted by C. Alfred "Chief" Anderson, Tuskegee Institute's chief instructor pilot. Ms. Roosevelt became an outspoken supporter of Tuskegee's flying program and helped secure additional financing for construction at Moton Field.

On November 6, 1998, this historic site was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Hangar One was restored and the grand opening of that building was on October 10, 2008.

The Tuskegee Airmen's legacy is kept alive today at this National Historic Site, and the unique diorama at our museum.

Scheduled to be the first (*and possibly only*) coin of 2021 to be part of the US Mint's America the Beautiful Silver Bullion Coin™ Program, will be the **2021 Tuskegee Airmen America the Beautiful Silver Bullion Coin**. The program debuted in 2010 and this coin will complete the fifty-six original coin issues.



The final Tuskegee Airmen coin design, chosen by the Treasury Secretary, will likely be unveiled by the Mint in early 2021.





# THE AIRMEN POSTWAR

During the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. 2019 National Convention held in Orlando, FL, a luncheon featured two famed Tuskegee Airmen speakers, **James Harvey** and **Harry Stewart**. These airmen in 1949, were members of the 332nd Fighter Group stationed at Lockbourne Air Base in Ohio. Their team won the 1949 USAF first Top Gun competition. They talked about the team selection, preparation for the competition, and their experiences during the actual competition. The winning trophy was lost for 47 years, and the results not recorded in USAF documentation. The trophy commemorates the outstanding achievement of four Air Force units in both the 1949 and 1950 service-wide competitions.

An Air Force historian was able to discover the location of the trophy (*now on permanent display at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force*) and obtain recognition for this team from the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group. Two months later, the 332nd was inactivated by the Department of Defense as a result of the Order to integrate the Armed Forces of the United States, and the personnel of the 332nd were reassigned to other units.

In 1950 the Air Force conducted a second competition, but suspended the event due to the outbreak of the Korean War. The competition is represented today by both the William Tell and the Gunsmoke competitions.

Suffice it to say that African-Americans since World War II have continued to excel in the fields of aviation and space, not only as members of the Air Force, but as members of other military services. They, and countless others, can thank the Tuskegee Airmen for helping to open the doors of opportunity for them, and inspiring others to excel in a world full of obstacles.

## THE TOP GUNS FROM TUSKEGEE

Contrary to negative predictions from some quarters, Tuskegee Airmen were some of the best pilots in the U.S. Army Air Corps due to a combination of pre-war experience and the personal drive of those accepted for training. Their combat record did much to quiet those directly involved with the group, notably bomber crews who often requested them for escort.

In 1949, the 332nd entered the first annual U. S. Continental Gunnery Meet in Las Vegas, Nevada. The competition included shooting aerial targets, shooting targets on the ground and dropping bombs on targets. Flying the Republic P-47N Thunderbolt, the 332nd Fighter Wing took first place in the conventional fighter class. The pilots were Capt. Alva Temple (Carrollton, AL), Lts. Harry Stewart, James Harvey III, and Herbert Alexander. Lt. Harvey said, *"We had a perfect score. Three missions, two bombs per plane. We didn't guess at anything, we were good."* They became known as The Tuskegee Top Guns.



After segregation in the military was ended in 1948, the veteran Tuskegee Airmen now found themselves in high demand throughout the newly formed United States Air Force. They were instrumental in postwar developments in aviation. Edward A. Gibbs was a civilian flight instructor in the U.S. Aviation Cadet Program at Tuskegee during its inception. He later became the founder of Negro Airmen International, an association joined by many airmen. General Daniel "Chappie" James Jr. (then a Lt.) was an instructor of the 99th Pursuit Squadron, later a fighter pilot in Europe, and, in 1975, became the first African American to reach the rank of four-star general.

In 2005, seven Tuskegee Airmen, including Lt. Col. Herbert Carter, Col. Charles McGee, group historian Ted Johnson, and Lt. Col. Lee Archer, flew to Iraq, to speak to active duty airmen serving in the current incarnation of the 332nd, the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing. *"This group represents the linkage between the 'greatest generation' of airmen and the 'latest generation' of airmen,"* said Lt. Gen. Walter E. Buchanan III, commander of the Ninth Air Force.

On 29 March 2007, the Tuskegee Airmen were collectively awarded a Gold Medal by Congress. The medal is currently on display at the Smithsonian Institution.