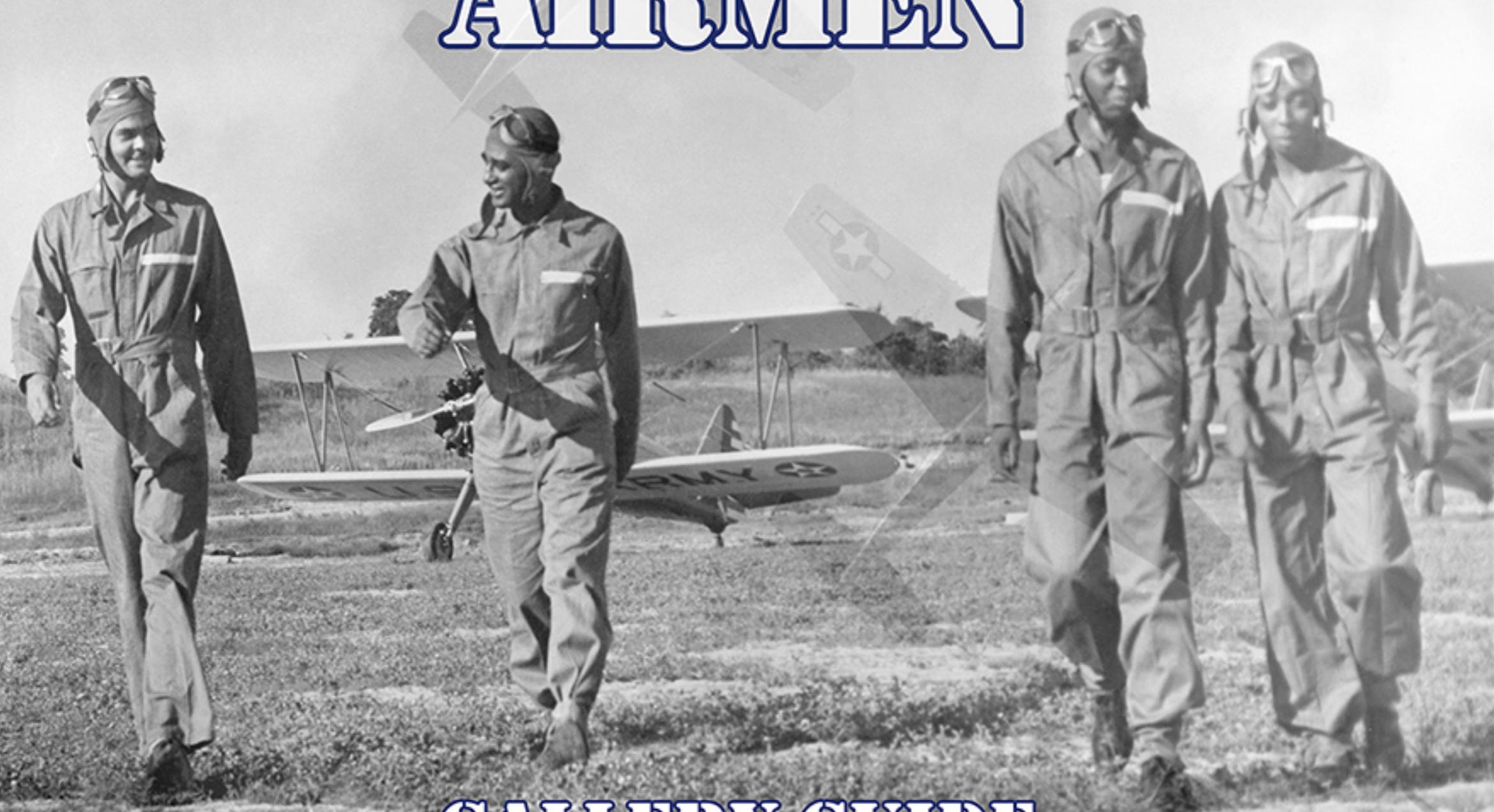


TUSKEGEE AIRMEN



GALLERY GUIDE

National Museum of the U.S. Air Force™

Reflecting American society and law at the time, the US military remained racially segregated during World War II. Most African American soldiers and sailors were restricted to labor battalions or other support positions. One experiment in the US Army Air Forces, however, demonstrated conclusively that African Americans—if given equal opportunities and training—could fly in, command, and support combat units as well as anyone. These men, known as the “Tuskegee Airmen,” served with distinction in combat, and they contributed to the eventual integration of the US armed services, with the US Air Force leading the way.

POLITICAL PRESSURE

In the late 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt anticipated that the US could be drawn into a war in Europe. His administration began a pilot training program in 1938 to create a reserve of trained civilian fliers in case of a national emergency. African American leaders argued that blacks should share with whites the burden of defending the United States, and the government opened the program to African Americans. In 1940, the Selective Training and Service Act banned racial discrimination in conscription, clearing the way for blacks to be trained for US Army Air Corps service.

Tuskegee Institute, a black college founded in Alabama in 1881 by Booker T. Washington, participated in the Roosevelt administration’s pilot training program, and graduated its first civilian-licensed pilots in May 1940. Tuskegee Institute and the flying school at Tuskegee Army Air Field were the main sources of black military pilots in WW II (nine others were trained as liaison pilots at Fort Sill, Oklahoma).



The Tuskegee Airmen, while not the only African Americans to serve in World War II, became a symbol of pride for many Americans. This 1943 poster appealed directly to the African American community.

TRAINING BEGINS

Reflecting contemporary American custom and War Department policy of segregation, the Army Air Corps announced the formation of its first-ever black combat unit, the 99th Pursuit (later Fighter) Squadron, in March 1941. The first ground crew trained at Chanute Army Air Field (AAF), Illinois, and pilots trained at Tuskegee. Eventually, black aviation mechanics, technicians, and other flight crew were trained at Tuskegee and other technical training bases located throughout the country during the war.

Primary flight training took place in Tuskegee Institute's Division of Aeronautics at the school's Moton Field. Basic and advanced training and transition to military aircraft took place at nearby Tuskegee Army Air Field, which was officially established on July 23, 1941. Lieutenant Colonel (later Brigadier General) Noel F. Parrish,

a white officer, commanded the installation during most of the war. He was well respected by his troops for his tact and concern for the African American Airmen facing discrimination.



An instructor teaches the parts of an Allison liquid-cooled P-40 engine to a class of white aviation cadets and black maintenance students.



Lieutenant Colonel (later Brig Gen) Noel F. Parrish with an Aviation Cadet at Tuskegee.



Plaque presented to Col Parrish by the officers at Tuskegee AAF at the end of the war to show their appreciation.



Command Pilot wings worn by Col Parrish.

MOTON FIELD – PRIMARY FLIGHT TRAINING FOR TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

Moton Field, Alabama, provided the only primary flight training facility for student pilots who became the famed Tuskegee Airmen. Construction of Moton Field, named for the Tuskegee Institute's second president, Robert R. Moton, started in June 1941. By early November 1941, the first group of student pilots had completed their primary training and transferred to nearby Tuskegee Army Air Field to continue their flight instruction. Before it closed in 1946, almost 1,000 Tuskegee Airmen received their primary flight training at Moton Field in Stearman PT-13 and PT-17 Kaydets and Fairchild PT-19A Cornell aircraft.

In 1972, a large portion of the airfield was deeded to the city of Tuskegee for use as a municipal airport. In October 2008, the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site opened at Moton Field, which recognized its significance as a place of national importance.



Tuskegee students were judged on how well they flew their Stearman trainers. If they passed primary training, they advanced to basic and finally advanced training.

CHARLES ALFRED "CHIEF" ANDERSON

A world-famous flier before World War II, Chief Anderson became the first African American to earn a commercial pilot license. In 1940, the Tuskegee Institute hired him as its chief flight instructor to develop its pilot training program. The US Army Air Corps awarded Tuskegee the contract to provide primary flight training in February 1941.

Chief Anderson earned national support for Tuskegee flight training when First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who had a keen interest in the program, visited the school in March 1941. When she accepted his offer of a flight, Anderson flew her around the school. This short flight, considered by most people at the time to be very daring, brought media attention to the program, demonstrated that blacks could fly airplanes, and showed that the Tuskegee program had the First Lady's complete trust and support.



First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt supported the Civilian Pilot Training Program and the War Training Service. She is pictured here in a Piper J-3 Cub trainer with "Chief" Anderson, a pioneer black aviator and respected instructor at the Tuskegee Institute.

STEARMAN PT-13D KAYDET

The United States and several Allied nations used the Kaydet as a standard primary trainer from the late 1930s to the end of World War II. Originally designed in 1933 by Lloyd Stearman for the civilian market, it received the designation PT-13 Kaydet when the US Army Air Corps adopted it in 1936. Two years later, the Boeing Airplane Company purchased the Stearman Company and continued producing many versions of the Kaydet using different engines. Those aircraft with a Lycoming engine were designated the PT-13; with a Continental engine, the PT-17; and with a Jacobs engine, the PT-18. A later version with a cockpit canopy was designated the PT-27.

Well-liked by students who flew it, the Kaydet trained many thousands of pilots during World War II. Following the war, the US Army Air Forces phased out Kaydets in favor of more modern trainers. Of the more than 10,000 Kaydets ordered for the United States and its allies, over 2,100 were PT-13s for the USAAF. The Museum's PT-13D was donated in 1959 by Boeing, and it is painted as it looked leaving the assembly line.

Technical Notes:

Engine: Lycoming R-680 of 220 hp

Maximum speed: 125 mph

Range: 450 miles

Ceiling: 14,000 ft

Weight: 2,717 lbs



Stearman PT-13D Kaydet in the World War II Gallery at the National Museum of the United States Air Force.



The Kaydet was a primary trainer -- the first airplane a cadet would fly. Even more importantly, this was the aircraft they would solo in before receiving their pilot wings. (U.S. Air Force photo)

DAVIS LEADS THE 99TH INTO COMBAT

Segregation required the 99th Fighter Squadron to have a black leader. After three white officers commanded the squadron, First Lieutenant George S. Roberts became the first black to command the squadron in June 1942. In August 1942, Captain Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., was chosen to lead the outfit overseas. One of just two black line officers in the Army—the other was his father, the first African American general in the US Army—Captain Davis, a West Point graduate. He possessed the leadership skills and personal strength necessary to overcome racism and to make him an effective combat leader. Davis later became the US Air Force's first African American general.



Captain Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. (right), greets some of the first aviation cadets at Tuskegee.

Tuskegee graduated its first five USAAF fighter pilots on March 7, 1942, and more soon followed. After completing their training, the 99th Pursuit Squadron (later Fighter Squadron) went to North Africa. Flying Curtiss P-40 Warhawks, they were attached to the all-white 33rd Fighter Group at Fordjouna, Tunisia, in the spring of 1943.

Academy D Bow

HEADQUARTERS
AIR CORPS TRAINING DEPARTMENT
TUSKEGEE INSTITUTION, ALABAMA

July 29, 1942.

SPECIAL ORDER 1
NO 1)

1. Having reported to this station, July 27, 1942, in compliance with orders shown above their respective names, the following Aviation Cadets are assigned to this command for duty:

Par. 8, SO #10, No. Post Order, Michigan, dated July 26, 1942.
Cadet William H. Carter
CARTER, WILLIAM H., 2601224

Par. 1, SO #107, No. Montgomery Recruiting Station, Montgomery, Alabama, dated July 27, 1942.
Cadet Frederick H. Moore
MOORE, FREDERICK H., JR., 14051310

Par. 5, SO #265, U. S. Army Recruiting Station, Dallas, Texas, dated July 26, 1942.
Cadet William D. Powell, Jr.
POWELL, WILLIAM D., 18042170

2. Having reported to this station, July 28, 1942, in compliance with orders shown above their respective names, the following Aviation Cadets are assigned to this command for duty:

Par. 31, SO #162, No. 152nd Service Unit, Reception Center, Fort Rucker, Okla., dated July 28, 1942.
Cadet Robert Anderson
ANDERSON, ROBERT C., JR., 15051074
Cadet George Thomas
THOMAS, GEORGE T., 15051074

Par. 1, SO #107, Air Corps Training Department, Reception Flying Services, Ouse, Texas, dated July 26, 1942.
Cadet William H. Wade
WADE, WILLIAM H., 14051310

3. Having reported to this station July 28, 1942, in compliance with Par. 34, SO #204, No. Camp Davis, S. C., dated July 3, 1942, Private CHARLES DUDLEY BROWN, 14049770, Coast Artillery (CA), is appointed Aviation Cadet effective July 29, 1942, and assigned to this command for duty.

4. Having reported to this station in compliance with Par. 31, SO #137, The Department, Washington, D. C., dated May 14, 1942, Captain EDWARD C. SMITH, OCSAL, Infantry, is assigned to this command for duty and appointed Commandant of Cadets.

5. Having reported to this station, July 29, 1942, in compliance with orders shown above their respective names, the following Aviation Cadets are assigned to this command for duty:

Page 2, SO #107, dated July 27, 1942.

Par. 4, SO #170, United States Army Recruiting Station, Chicago, Illinois, dated July 27, 1942.
Cadet Charles E. Brown
BROWN, CHARLES E., 14051310
Cadet Charles William
WILLIAMS, ROBERT C., 14051310

Par. 1, SO #141, No. Sixth Recruiting Station, Hartford, Conn., dated July 17, 1942.
Cadet Lewis E. Williams
WILLIAMS, LEWIS E., 14051310

Par. 8, SO #110, Reception Center, Fort Benning, Georgia, dated July 26, 1942.
SMITH, EDWARD C., JR., 15051074

W. F. HARRIS
Captain, Air Corps,
Commanding.

5 AND
2 AND
1 FILE
2 SO #137
1 SO #107

W. F. Harris
July 29, 1942

Orders assigning the first aviation cadets to Tuskegee.



After completing their advanced training, Tuskegee Airmen learned to fly combat fighters, like the Curtiss P-40 which saw service around the world.



While escorting B-25 Mitchell bombers over Sicily, 1st Lt (later Maj) Charles Hall scored the Tuskegee Airmen's first aerial victory. Seated in the cockpit of his P-40 Warhawk, Hall points to his freshly painted "kill" marking.



Captain Hall received this Distinguished Flying Cross for shooting down two German airplanes while the Tuskegee Airmen helped to protect American ground forces of the Fifth Army at Anzio, Italy, on January 28, 1944.



Pilot wings worn by Maj Hall.

On June 2, 1943, the 99th saw its first combat as the Allies secured the Italian island of Pantelleria. On July 2, the unit scored its first aerial victory against the Luftwaffe when 1st Lt Charles B. Hall shot down a Focke-Wulf Fw 190 on his eighth mission. Their first losses occurred that same day as Lts Sherman White and James McCullin were killed.

Just three months into its combat tour, the 99th was accused of lacking discipline and aggressiveness. Davis saved the squadron by explaining that, unlike white units, the 99th had no experienced veterans to guide them. Also, they flew against the best of the Luftwaffe while outnumbered and flying less capable P-40s. In fact, the 99th flew more missions per pilot than other units and never ran from a fight.

Given more time and experience, the 99th Fighter Squadron proved itself in combat. One of the Tuskegee Airmen's best days came on January 27, 1944. On that day, sixteen 99th fighters attacked fifteen German Focke-Wulf Fw 190s dive-bombing Allied shipping near the beachhead at Anzio, Italy. During the ensuing engagement, the 99th shot down ten enemy airplanes.



1st Lt Robert W. Deiz was one of the 99th Fighter Squadron pilots who shot down ten Fw 190s on January 27, 1944. He shot down another one the next day. Interestingly, Deiz was the Tuskegee Airman depicted in the famous "Keep Us Flying" War Bonds poster.

ESCORT EXCELLENCE



Tuskegee Airmen being briefed for a mission at their base in Ramitelli, Italy, March 1945.

While the 99th Fighter Squadron continued to fight its way through Sicily and Italy alongside white units, Benjamin Davis returned to the United States to take command of the new 332nd Fighter Group. Another segregated unit, the 332nd included three fighter squadrons – the 100th, 301st, and 302nd – equipped with Bell P-39 Airacobras. In February 1944, the 332nd entered combat for the first time, from its base at Montecorvino, Italy, attacking enemy supply lines. Within a few months, however, the unit exchanged its P-39s for Republic P-47 Thunderbolts to fly escort for Fifteenth Air Force bombers.

In July 1944, the 99th Fighter Squadron, which had been flying close air support missions with its P-40s, joined the three other fighter squadrons of the 332nd Fighter Group, placing all the segregated Tuskegee Airmen on the same base. At that time, the 332nd replaced its P-40s and P-47s with sleek North American P-51 Mustangs. To identify themselves in combat, the 332nd Fighter Group painted the tails of their fighters bright red, which earned them the nickname “Red Tails.”



The 332nd Fighter Group's distinctive red markings gave them the name “Red Tails.”

Known as a strict disciplinarian, Colonel Davis urged his men to prove themselves in combat as the best reply to racism. They flew 311 missions, of which 179 were escorting bombers, from June 1944 through the end of the war. The Tuskegee Airmen performed with great skill and courage, on one occasion shooting down thirteen German fighters. Despite its success, however, the 332nd was often outnumbered. On one mission, Davis led thirty-nine aircraft against more than one hundred German fighters, shooting down five for the loss of one. It earned Davis the Distinguished Flying Cross for bravery and leadership.

Tuskegee Airmen faced the best the Luftwaffe had, including the first jet fighters. On March 24, 1945, the 332nd became one of the first Italy-based fighter units to escort B-17s all the way to Berlin and back. Along the way, they met twenty-five German Me 262 jets. In the ensuing combat, the 332nd shot down three of the eight jets destroyed that day and earned the 332nd a Distinguished Unit Citation.

During the war, Tuskegee trained around 990 pilots and sent 350 overseas. When the war in Europe ended, the Tuskegee Airmen had shot down 112 enemy aircraft, destroyed 150 aircraft on the ground, and knocked out more than 600 railroad cars and forty boats and barges. Approximately 150 Tuskegee Airmen were killed in combat or in accidents, and thirty-two became prisoners of war. By any measure, the Tuskegee project proved a resounding success.

Colonel Davis returned to the US to command the 477th Medium Bombardment Group, which also trained at Tuskegee, but the war ended in Japan before the group saw action.



Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. (1912-2002) became the USAF's first African American general officer in 1954 and retired as a lieutenant general in 1970. He received his fourth star in 1998.



Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. (right), takes command of the 477th Composite Group, June 1945. At the far left is his father, the Army's first black general.

LEGACY OF EQUALITY

The Tuskegee Airmen proved themselves equal to white fliers and support troops, but black Airmen remained segregated after the war. However, they had made it obvious to many leaders, President Harry S. Truman in particular, that segregation in the military was morally wrong, inefficient, and should be ended. Stating that the “highest standards of democracy” were essential in the armed services, President Truman’s Executive Order 9981, of July 26, 1948, directed that

“...there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.”

When the US Air Force became a separate service in 1947, it benefited directly from the experience of the Tuskegee Airmen. The USAF was the first service to erase the color line, thanks largely to the pioneering efforts and courageous legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen. In April 2006, the US Congress voted to award the Tuskegee Airmen a Congressional Gold Medal, the most prestigious award Congress can give to civilians.



Tuskegee students learned to fly on Stearman biplanes. At far left is Capt Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the squadron commander.



Red Tails in flight.



Captured in Italy during the summer of 1944, Lt. (later Maj) Lloyd "Scotty" Hathcock spent the rest of the war in Stalag Luft III and Stalag VII-A prison camps. After the war, Hathcock stayed in the service and helped to desegregate the US Air Force.

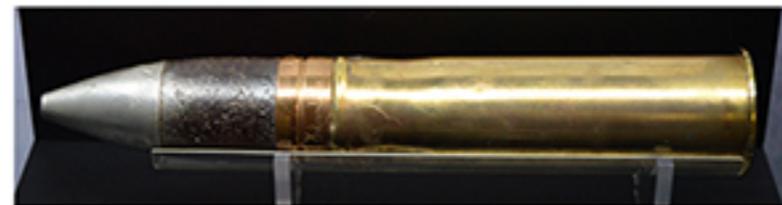


Leather cap, dog tags, and wrist bracelet worn by Hathcock in Italy with the 332nd Fighter Group.

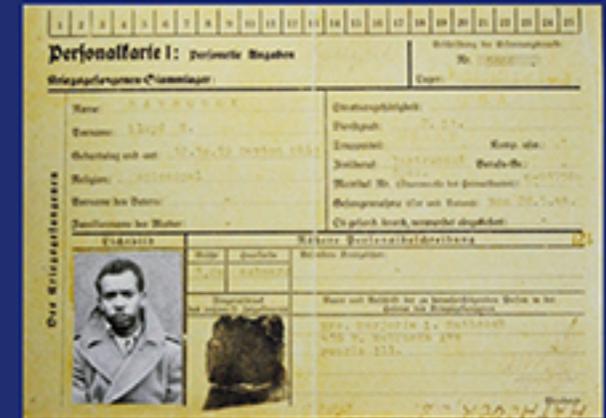
ARTIFACTS FOR DISPLAY



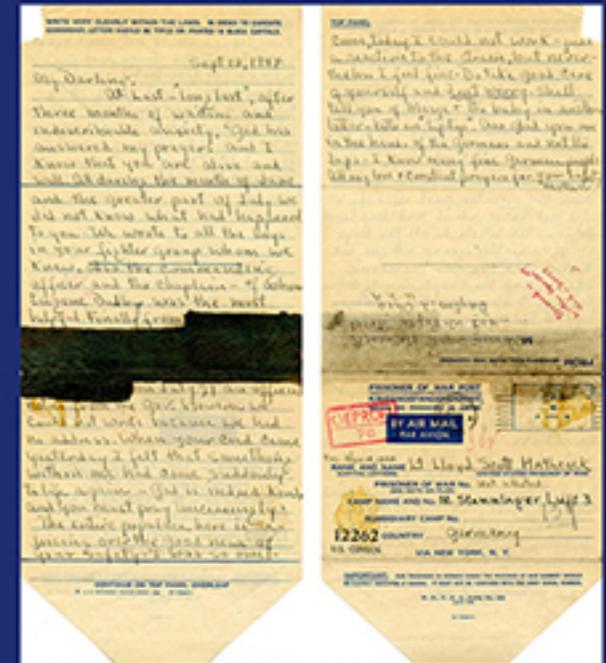
Pilot wings presented to Hathcock upon graduation and spare pilot wings he purchased at Tuskegee Army Air Field. The donor wore the presentation wings throughout his combat career.



When the 332nd Fighter Group arrived in Italy, it initially flew P-39s. Armed with a 37 mm cannon in the nose, the P-39 was excellent for attacking ground targets. This 37 mm round was donated by Hathcock.



Hathcock's prisoner identification card.



Prisoner of War letter from Hathcock's mother. Notice the information blacked out by the wartime censor.



Aviation Cadet cap and collar insignia worn by Hathcock while in pilot training.



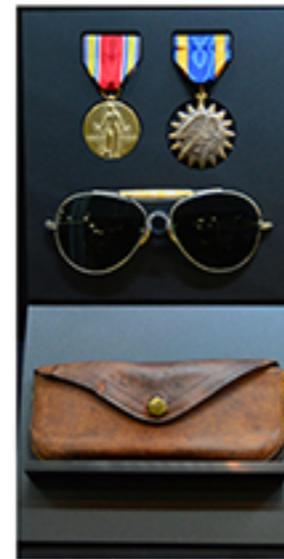
Two-War Flight Suit: Tuskegee Airman Lt Haldane King, a B-25 pilot, wore this A-4 flight suit during World War II. His son, Capt Haldane King, Jr., a KC-135 pilot, wore it during the Southeast Asia War.



Lt Haldane King in World War II.



Capt Haldane King, Jr. in the Southeast Asia War (Not pictured wearing the flight suit on display).



Navigation kit, Victory Medal, Air Medal, and sunglasses donated by Lt Col Charles H. DeBow, one of the five men in the first class of pilots to graduate from Tuskegee. He also commanded the 301st Fighter Squadron.



Service coat with the Twelfth Air Force emblem, pilot wings, medal ribbons, and three service stripes belonging to 1st Lt John L. Hamilton. A pilot with the 99th Fighter Squadron, he received the Purple Heart after being wounded in the leg by flak during a dive-bombing mission at Anzio on March 9, 1944. [Please note that the "U.S." lapel and rank insignia have been added to complete the uniform.]



This World War II flying jacket belonged to Tuskegee Airman Col USAF Ret) Edward C. Gleed. Enlisting in the 9th Cavalry in 1941, Gleed was assigned to military intelligence. In 1942, he entered aviation cadet training at Tuskegee, AL, and graduated in December as a second lieutenant. During WW II, Gleed became the 332nd Fighter Group's operations officer. He is officially credited with two kills. The artwork on the back of the jacket represents the red-tailed, red-nosed P-51 Mustang aircraft flown by the 332nd Fighter Group.



Wearing the jacket on display, Capt (later Col) Edward C. Gleed (right), the 332nd Fighter Group's operations officer and Lt (later Lt Col) Woodrow W. Crockett (center) planning for a mission in March 1945.



Flight jacket worn by 1st Lt William Noel Alsbrook during a strafing mission against enemy railway, highway, and river targets in Austria on November 19, 1944. He and three other 332nd pilots earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for this mission. Fifteenth Air Force commander Maj Gen Nathan Twining, later the Chief of Staff of the USAF, personally commended the 332nd Fighter Group. This jacket was donated in very poor condition, but the significant artwork on the back survived.



Parachute "D" ring and ripcord, pilot wings, and uniform insignie of Capt Mac Ross, one of the first five pilots to graduate from Tuskegee. The "D" ring and ripcord are from the parachute used by Ross in 1942 when he became the first US black military pilot in history to save his life by an emergency parachute jump. Ross, who later commanded the 100th Fighter Squadron, died in 1944 during an aircraft accident in Italy.



Knife used by SSgt Benny Smith, while in Italy with the 332nd Fighter Group, to open cans of food rations, cut down small trees, and as a screwdriver.



Aerial gunner wings, Technical Training Command shoulder insignie, First Air Force shoulder patch, and AAF Engineering Specialist sleeve patch worn by S. C. Harvey, a B-25 flight engineer and gunner in the 617th Bomb Squadron, 477th Bomb Group.

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL

In April 2006, the US Congress voted to award the Tuskegee Airmen a Congressional Gold Medal, the most prestigious award Congress can give to civilians. The award was presented to the surviving Tuskegee Airmen on March 29, 2007, at a ceremony in the rotunda of the US Capitol "in recognition of their unique military record, which inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces."

The medal features three Tuskegee Airmen in profile—an officer, a mechanic, and a pilot. The eagle symbolizes flight, nobility, and the highest ideals of the nation. The years 1941-1949 indicate the years that these Airmen were assigned to segregated units. The reverse side depicts three types of airplanes flown by the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II: the P-40, P-51, and B-25. The medals on display are bronze copies of the original gold medal, which remains at the Smithsonian Institution per public law.





NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE™