



**NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE®**
Wings & Things Guest Lecture Series

Integration of the Air Force: The Early Years

Lt. Col. (Ret.) James Harvey III and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Harry Stewart, who served with the famed Tuskegee Airmen, discuss the Air Force between 1941 and 1949.

Colonel Harvey: How many of you in the audience have seen the movie “The Tuskegee Airmen”? Very good. There are a lot of you that haven’t seen it; Blockbuster has it, you can rent a DVD or VHS and when you watch this movie, don’t talk just listen because a lot of...you have to listen to the words that are said to get the full impact of the movie. Okay, to set the tone for the military back in those days in the forties, I’d like to read something to you. Many officers in the Army, the majority of whom were from the South believed in the stereotypes perpetuated by the Army War College studies of the Negro, produced in the previous decade in the war college reports of 1936. The War College studies and reports were primarily unscientific surveys; I repeat unscientific surveys and interviews of white officers who commanded Negro troops in World War 1. According to the studies, Negro troops were childlike, careless, shiftless, irresponsible, secretive, superstitious, unmoral and untruthful and more likely to be guilty of moral turpitude. A Negro soldier was also branded as a comic and emotionally unstable; musically inclined with good rhythm and it’s said, loyal and compliant, some heavy adjectives; plus we were nothing; they classified us with the ape and the baboon. So you can see what we were up against in the military. In my pocket, I have some cards. The reason I have these cards, I was giving a talk one time about a half-hour talk, about 15 minutes into the talk, I had a senior moment. So the talk lasted another minute or two and that was it. So tonight you’re going to have to suffer through all these cards. Now the Tuskegee experiment, was designed to fail, that’s right designed to fail. There are a lot of obstacles but there are three major obstacles. 1) They put the flying school at Tuskegee, Alabama. At that particular time Tuskegee, Alabama was the most racist place in the United States. It was sport to go out on a Saturday night, pick up a black person, beat him, castrate him, hang him or all of the above. The second major obstacle was they needed an airfield for us to get our basic and advance training at; they didn’t have one. So the War department, today it’s known as the defense department but the War department gave the contract to a black architectural firm called McKissack and McKissack. They were supposed to design and build this airfield. We gave them nine months to do it. They did it. So the second major obstacle was shattered. The third obstacle was they said if they graduate we’ll make them the a Pursuit Squadron. A Pursuit Squadron is the most demanding flying there is; you have to master navigation, gunnery and acrobatics and we did. So we shot down all their major obstacles. Colonel Davis, who was the Colonel then, now General and he went through West Point. He ate by himself, he had a room by himself, he swam by himself and no one talked to him; for four years he had the silent treatment. Now, he had a goal, to graduate from West Point as a second Lieutenant. Well, he did. Understand that there are about 365 in his class; he was number 65, very good man. During this period of time, the washout or failure rate for white cadets was running at 63%. Now remember all those

adjectives I gave you earlier? Well the first class that went through Tuskegee, the washout rate was 40%. So they said there is something wrong with equation. So they made sure they had a washout rate of 70% or higher so it didn't have anything to do with our flying. That's why only 996 pilots graduated from Tuskegee. Our training was different than the white cadets. Everything we did had to be perfect, remember they are trying to wash us out. So everything we did, they did was trying to wash us out. So everything we did had to be perfect. They said, do a 360 degree turn at 2000 ft, 140 miles an hour; that's what they meant, nothing more nothing less. Say, I'll do a lazy eight, the top 2000 and the bottom a 1000; that's what they meant. So you had to take into consideration, gravity coming down and inertia going up and arrive at these figures. Come in for a landing. Two main gear and tail gear touch down on the numbers at the same time. So everything we did had to be perfect, that's why when the group went overseas, they were so good because of our training but they were trying to wash us out. So they created monsters is what they did. During World War II, when they sent troops overseas they sent one convoy with a navy escort. When the 99th and all of its personnel went overseas, single ship all by itself; here again, maybe we'll get rid of the 99th. They went to North Africa and the mission in North Africa was strafing and dive bombing and they were very good at that. While they were doing this, a bad report was sent to Washington; bad attitude, poor formation flying, not being able to find the targets or secondary targets and as it went up through the chain of command, each commander attacked on his two cents and finally got to Washington and if you, those of you who saw the movie, remember they talked about this performance of the 99, and Colonel Davis gave his rebuttal to this performance and then that's when the 99th got in a 332nd got permission to escort bombers. Now one thing that helped the 332nd get permission to escort bombers [Indiscernible] [00:06:46] in two days they shot down 25 aircrafts; 13 one day and 12 the next day. That's a whole squadron. And the Germans respected the 332nd fighter group, they respected and feared the 332nd. Now the white pilots respected and feared the Luftwaffe and the Luftwaffe respected and feared the 332nd. Now those of you who saw the movie, they talked about a mission over Berlin and the captain in the movie wanted the 332nd to escort the bombers and they said, "We can't. It's because of logistics" Well, the 'logistics' were that they did not have enough large fuel tanks to fly from their base, escort the bombers up over Berlin and back. Major Blair, did live in Denver; he got some airmen or some people together in a flat bed, went by over to another P-51 base and said, "I'd like to have some tanks, large tanks for the P-51s" They said we don't have any, put in your order; when the tanks come in tomorrow we will fill your order, maybe. Well, Major Blair went back to the base, got another flat bed, you know, now he has two flat beds; he went out to the spur that came from the main track into this base, crossed the tracks with one of the flat beds and waited and when the train came along, took over the engine or the engineer, took him over and they said, "We want to get x number of tanks off the train" They did and they said, "Okay, you can go now" So they took the tanks to the base, loaded them on the aircraft. So then the 332nd was able to fly this mission up to Berlin. In that particular mission the Germans put 22 jets and the 332nd shot down three and damaged two others. In 1945, in September of 1945, I was slated to go to Okinawa to escort B-29 from Okinawa into Japan. Latter part of August they dropped the A-bomb so I wasn't able to make it. And before they broke our group up in 1949, we had a weapons meet. Colonel Stuart will talk about that. When they

broke our group up in 1949, I went overseas in July of 1949 and I went to Misawa Air Force base, in Northern part of Honshu. Prior to me going there, they sent my records, 201 file they called it. Lieutenant Drummond, who was also in the 99th, we both went to the same squadron or same group I should say. But before we got there, I already said they sent our records and the base commander called all the pilots in to the base theatre and he said, "We have two inward pilots coming to the 49th fighter group and they will be assigned to one of the squadron". Well Lieutenant Drummond and I reported in to the commander, we got a little chit-chat. He said, "What do you want us to call you? This is a military outfit now. What do you want us to call you?" I said, "Well, I'm a First Lieutenant, Eddie Drummond is a Second Lieutenant. How about Lieutenant Harvey and Lieutenant Drummond" He said, "Okay" But then he make a mistake, he said, "We have three fighter squadrons on the base; two P-51 squadrons and F-80 squadron. Which squadron do you want to go to?" I immediately F-80, so they put us both in the F-80 squadron. Now that time they didn't have any jet trainers. All they had was the AT-6 that were used for advanced training and what they also used it for instrument training for the jet pilots and for the P-51 pilots. You get in the back-seat, pull the hood up, you couldn't see out. So I could look at where your instruments in the cockpit. That was what they had us do? I got in the back-seat, the pilot for the 9th fighter squadron was in the front-seat; we got clearance for takeoff, taxi out, line up on the runway with the brakes on, then he said, "Okay, you have it" So I would take the aircraft, throttle up down the runway, take off, gear up, flaps up, prop pitch back, throttle back; all those things we had to do, fly around, do the maneuvers he wanted me to do. Then we contacted ground control approach to come in for a landing. They would vector me in for a landing, I touched down on the runway, all in instruments and after I touched down the pilot up in the front would take over the aircraft. I had two flights like that. In the meantime, we're going to ground school on the F-80 to learn about the systems of the aircraft. If you can fly one aircraft, you can fly any aircraft. The only difference were the emergency procedures and the systems. So we learned the systems and I took off. Now they said, that you will wave goodbye on take-off because these controls are very sensitive, because I had been flying a P-47, where you have to push and pull in this aircraft, you just a little pressure and it goes. They said, you will wave goodbye on takeoff and I said. "Not me, I'm too good" I wave goodbye on takeoff, only one flight very first one and that was it. When the Colonel briefed the pilots at the base theatre that day and told them we're coming and maybe assigned it to one of the squadrons, the pilots they told this later on themselves. They told the Colonel and said, "No way are we going to fly with them, no way" Anyway we reported into the squadron, we flew we took off, we soloed in the F-80. They saw we could fly, flew quite a few missions, they saw we could fly and they started flying with us and 14 months later, they made me a flight commander and that's just before we went to Korea and these same pilots who said they weren't going to fly with me, I was scheduling them to fly missions in Korea, good turn around but they were very good pilots, very good guys; most of them were from the South and like they said, you know, they were prejudiced but they saw we were good, we were good in fact we were better than they were. In Korea, as the General said, I got a 126 mission flying the F-80 and supporting the ground troops. The only close call I had, I was strafing a town in South Korea, it was a school house but there were soldiers in the school house not children and when I pulled up off my strafing run, I banged to the left and I heard a thump. I looked

around and looked out and right tip-tank was missing. Well, the pilot behind me, coming in behind me, when we got back to Japan he stated that, a ball of fire the size of a basketball had come up and hit my tank and took it off and had I been flying straight and level, I would have gotten in the wing and that would have been it. Now the aircraft I had flown was the PT-19, PT-13, AT-6, P-40, P-47, P-51, F-80, T-33, F-86 A, E, F and D, F-94, F-89 and F-102. They are the only aircraft I've flown. I retired in May of 1949 and 1965 and before I retired, I knew I was going to have to work, so I was out looking for a job. United ran an ad in the newspaper so I applied for this job. They had a representative in the local hotel so I went and sat down talked to the representative, we talked for quite a while and he says, you know what, we have everything we're looking for but you're too old. The age cut off is 35, I was 41 and so, I said okay. Three years ago, I was talking to, I belong to an organization called the Dalians, they are pilots from World War I through today and I was talking to one of the pilots and he said I got a job at United in 1965, he said there was no age cut off, then the light went on; they just didn't want me. However, today it's different; today regardless of who you are male, female and what race, as long as you're qualified, you're considered. So things are much better today and like I said, I retired in May 1949 and I interviewed with United, then I interviewed with Oscar Mayer because I retired at Truax at Madison Wisconsin and that was a home office for Oscar Mayer and that was one of those owned by the Mayer family. So I interviewed with everybody just shy of Oscar himself. I interviewed for a week and the president of the company, I interviewed with him, he had me sit behind his desk in his chair and he interviewed me from the front and I told him, yes I will be back, if I'm hired I will be back and I will take your job. Anyway, they hired me. They said, "When can you go to work?" I said, "While I retire, I retire the 31st of May. I'd like a week off" They said, "Okay, report the first of June, I mean the 7th of June. So I report at the 7th of June at the plant, I was supposed to be there at three months going through each department from slaughter, right on through all the departments see how the products are made then they're were going to ship me out as salesman. Now one month into this program, they needed a salesman in New Jersey, Northern New Jersey. So they ship me out to Northern Jersey as a salesman. I was there for three years then I went to Detroit as a district manager, I was there for a year and a half and I went to Philadelphia at Pennsylvania to the plant as an assistant sales manager; I was there for three years, then I went to Denver as a distribution center manager. In Denver, I had ten salesmen, two district managers, two secretaries and three cooler people working for me and I had a four state region. I was the only black, no problems. In fact my whole military career and my civilian career, I didn't have any problems whatsoever. I felt very fortunate. Some of the guys weren't as fortunate as I was. Then I retired from Oscar Mayer in 1980, February 1980 and the people say, well what do you do now? I say, well I just do this and I travel and my wife loves to travel with me; she's here with me tonight and we just travel have a good time, enjoy life. That's the way I see it, I'm on the downhill but I can't say she's on the downhill. Like I say, I'm enjoying life. So with that I turn it over to Colonel Stuart.

Colonel Steward: Thank you Jim, can you hear me okay? Good, alrighty. First I want to thank General Metcalf and his staff for inviting us down here. It's been quite a trip, they took us out today to the museum. Personally, it's the first time I have been to the Air Force museum, wherein I was just overwhelmed with the work that's been done out there

and with the aircraft that they have for you view out there. I want to thank you very much and also wanted to say that our delivery this evening is we decided to break into three parts and the first part being Colonel Harvey, who will discuss the early or who had discussed the early days of the Tuskegee Airmen. Then myself, we'll just talk about the middle years and mainly the fighter gunnery event that the 332nd participated in May of 1949, and lastly but not least will be Major Sergeant Johnson, who will talk about the later years or integration as far as the Air Force is concerned. I would like to say also that at the end of our talks, we'd be happy to entertain any questions that you might have. I noticed and after you made the introductions, General that three of our Tuskegee Airmen came in. I'd like to introduce then with your permission. Thank you and the first is Lieutenant Colonel Richard Macon, who was a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft 3 back in World War II and here he is Richard Macon. Number two is one of our fairly new Tuskegee Airmen who did not serve during the war but he has done a yeoman's job as far as the Tuskegee Airman organization is concerned. That's Dr. Bryan Smith who I'd like to introduce, who is also the past president of the National Association, Bryan. The last person I want to introduce is a person that I have the utmost respect for and has been one of these people who sits in the back ground and does so many great things but you'll never hear name mentioned or he never gets any of the accolades or the congratulations and recognition that I think he should have. I'm going to go ahead and say something now that I know, he is not going to like at all but I have to say it because it's in my heart, I must get it out. About three years ago, this gentleman in his studies or let me say first that he is a nationally known historian of aviation. He has been enamored by the history of the Tuskegee Airmen. About three years ago, he felt as though enough had not been said or done for the Tuskegee Airmen in showing appreciation in what they did for our country and what he decided to do was, he went to a friend of his Senator Levin and said, "Senator Levin, I'd like suggest that maybe we should introduce a Bill in Congress or if you could introduce a Bill in Congress for the Congressional medal for the Tuskegee Airmen" Senator Levin said, "Yes, I will go ahead and do this" He asked this gentleman if he would get him the data necessary to go ahead and show what reasons there should be for giving such a recognition to the Tuskegee Airmen. This gentleman went out and he did the full job in giving Senator Levin all of that information. Just recently, the Senate has signed the Bill offering the Congressional medal to the Tuskegee Airmen and also the house has signed that Bill but the person who actually instigated this thing has not given the credit that I think he's been deserved for it, Mr. Philip Handleman would you please stand up for it. One thing that Colonel Harvey mentioned is a little bit of a contention as far as the numbers of graduates that came out of Tuskegee and I think he gave the number of 992 and I have a number of 932. I think my number is correct and I got [Indiscernible] [00:24:10] when you're there because five of those something you didn't know, five of those 932 were Haitian and these would be citizens of Haiti, who came and flew down to Tuskegee. They got to prescribe to [Carson] [00:24:25] of course they were Haitian citizens and they could not be given a commission in the United States Air force but they did get their wings and they went back and took their knowledge back to their homeland of Haiti. Which actually leaves a number of 928 black American pilots or 927 black American pilots who got their wings down at Tuskegee, Alabama. I came in the service in 1943 and I did go overseas in World War II, after which I came back to the States very early 1950, January 1950, got out of the service and followed a civilian career

from later on. But I guess the highlight of the time, the seven years or the six years and nine months that I was in the service was the 1949 United States, fighter gunnery meet that was given at Las Vegas, Nevada. Since the early 30s there has been an annual or bi-annual fighter gunnery meet competition among fighter groups in this country up until World War II. At World War II, this competition was suspended and then later on in 1949, the newly formed United States Air Force which at prior to that time been the United States Army Air Corps. The United Air Force, the commanding general decided that he would like to reactivate that competition among the fighter groups. As a result, he asked that three pilots be selected from each fighter group in the country to compete at a shootout in the area of Las Vegas, Nevada. Actually, [Indiscernible] [00:26:22] which is about 40 miles or 30 miles North or East of Las Vegas. In the 332nd fighter group which is the Tuskegee Airmen, by the way something that was not said by Colonel Harvey at that time, this name Tuskegee Airmen it's a newly found name, there was no such name until about 1972. A gentleman by the name of Charles Francis wrote a book about the exploits of the black American pilots in the military and for want of a name for this book, he decided since just about all of these pilots trained in Tuskegee Army Airfield that he would call it the Tuskegee Airmen. That's how that name came about in 1972 and it reached its ACME of popularity, a few years ago when the HBO film came out, "The Tuskegee Airmen." So everybody knows these guys as the Tuskegee Airmen but prior to that they were pilots who became graduated from Tuskegee Army field and they were better known probably as the 332nd fighter group among the cognoscente the 332nd fighter group or "Red Tails" and there again a lot of people have a story about these Red Tails, why did they paint your tails red? Well the fact is every aircraft in the War and certainly in the 15th Air Force that we were in had markings, identification to tell what group they were in visually, and each of the fighter groups had a distinctive marking on their tails to tell what group they belong to. It so happens that the 332nd or the Tuskegee Airmen had red tails. The 325th fighter had a checker board tail. The 52nd fighter group had a yellow tail. The 31st fighter had a candy striped tail. So all of them had distinctive markings. Of course the awe fullest thing that could have happened was that if they had painted our tails yellow, and then there would have been a big fight there. So we were red tails and certainly proud of it. Anyway getting back to the 1949 fighter gunnery meet, and the Tuskegee Airmen, three pilots who were selected after a inter-squadron, intra-squadron competition of the pilots within the 332nd; three pilots were selected to go to the fighter meet, and the same thing happened with each of the other fighter groups in the country, within those groups three pilots were selected to go out to the fighter gunnery meet. All in all 12 groups went out to compete in this group. There was a little problem that came up as half of them were jets, and half of them were propeller driven craft. It was felt that they did not want the propeller driven craft to compete with the jets at that time not because of the different type of propulsion unit, but because the jets were not equipped to fire rockets. So within the propeller driven class, we the 332nd competed with five other fighter groups there, six groups competing all together and the competition was to be gunnery, high altitude gunnery at 20,000 feet, medium altitude gunnery at 10,000 feet, rocketry, skip bombing, dive bombing and panel strafing. The contest started on May 2nd of 1949 and concluded on May 12th of 1949. After all of the statistics were in the 332nd came out handily as the winners of that contest. It was quite a joy to us because well, I guess to put it this way and I said it once before in the talk that I gave; look at this college

over here in Xenia, what the name of the college over there...it's Wilberforce and let's say that all of a sudden Wilberforce started playing some fantastic football and somebody could say, you know what's going to happen? Wilbur Forest is going to duel it out with Notre Dame. I bet that's just about how it is, so, the 332nd the underdogs, are going to go ahead and duel it out with the rest of the Air Force there and that's just the way we looked at it I guess and it made us very happy to think that. Not that we had any doubts as far as our abilities were concerned, but at least it was shown to the public that our abilities were just as good or on par with anyone else and that made us very proud and I'm sure it made the black community very proud also.

I know going out to the meet, it was quite exciting and actually about a year ago, I started flying again. I got the bug and started flying again and only because there are three motor gliders that are owned by the Detroit branch of the Tuskegee Airmen, and I decided to go and get my commercial license and the gliders there. But in doing so, it's like an old retread with really worn out tires, you know, go and trying to get some new tires there and I was having a difficult time in two areas and that was with my communication, the method of communicating with the tower now and the procedures you have to go through the communication side, I just wasn't up to it. And the other thing that I had a problem with was the rules and regulations they had as far as the operations, not of the aircraft was concerned, but operational limitations as far as the type of whether you can fly in, and you know, that type of thing and what you can fly over in the had these things called... what are they? Control zones? What are they? No, well... the big circles, the blue circles on the maps that you can't fly over them? The air spaces, that's what they have now. And what I'm trying to do, I'm trying to act as ignorant as possible so I can go ahead and give you an idea of what it felt like in flying out to Las Vegas on a P47. Captain Temple, the third member of our team, our leader at the time, who unfortunately is deceased, died a couple of years ago, but we were flying from [indiscernible] [0:33:45] out there and we got out to the uplands, west there, and I noticed that we were flying at a constant [indiscernible] setting of 10, 000-feet but even though it was at 10, 000-feet the ground kept coming up to us. Anyway, we found ourselves with... to make a long story short, down in the Grand Canyon. What a thrill. And we go along and the Grand Canyon and I'm looking up at these people who are standing up on these vistas up on the Canyon, looking up at them like this and they're waving down at us and we're flying right along there. Well, if I were to do that today, they'll show you how things have changed, I would lose my license to fly and I'd never get it back again. That's a highly restricted area now and you can't do that, but... that's just one of the things that I wanted to say tonight. We'll have more to say and we want to talk about not just the three phases of the talks but also some of our own personal experiences that we'll always remember and will thrill us in. I just like to mention two more, that's all.

One I was a real hot pilot when I graduated from flying school. Nobody could tell me a thing, I had been transferred over to a field called Walterboro, South Carolina to take training in a P47. Well, we would get assigned an altitude if I wasn't flying with somebody else or in a formation or something like that, I'd be assigned an altitude, maybe 20,000-feet or 22,000-feet over in some sector away from the field and very

boring sometime, because all I was doing was getting in flying time but nobody dared come in to that sector because that sector belonged to me. I was the baddest thing that there was in that sector and if another plane comes in there, that's their rump. Anyway, what happens one day, I'm circling around in this sector and here comes another P47, invading my territory. Same plane that I was flying, same kind of plane. So immediately I said, "I'm going to attack." So the idea is in playing in the air like us kids did in those planes like that. We'd get into a luffbery, we'd get into a dogfight and since the guns on the plane are fixed in the wing, you have to turn the plane to turn the guns, just like you'd aim the guns and the idea is to get on the other person's tail to shoot them down. That person, the idea is to get you off of their tail, like trying to turn tables on you or out maneuver you. Well, I turned it to this person and this person turned into me like this, and the next thing I know, this person is on my tail. I can't believe it. How did this person do this? So I straightened out, rocked my wings and I acknowledged defeat. So I headed back home and this plane started heading in the same direction I was. So I pulled into the traffic pattern, this person pulls into this traffic pattern too. I landed, this person landed. I taxied up to the revetment, this person taxied up to revetment. I got up and in the seat there and took my helmet off and threw it down, this person got up of their seat, took their helmet off and this flaming red hair fell down around her shoulders. I had just gotten my butt beat by a woman. She was a woman's auxiliary Air Force [indiscernible] [0:37:35]. And yes, she was aware. WASP, WASP, that's what it was, WASP, Women's Auxiliary Service Pilot, and you know, I laugh sometime now, but there was a certain humility I gained from there. And humility being not just the woman there but the humility being that the WASPs, if you have studied their history and you can go to the internet and do that, it's almost like you were reading the story of the Tuskegee Airmen. Almost as if you were. They had about the same numbers when I talk about the nine hundred and something numbers and they had a problem with recognition, just like the Tuskegee Airmen had and you know, I always have to say this because, you know, I think here's a group that did a tremendous job and they did not get the appreciation that even we have now, as Tuskegee Airmen, for what they did. The last thing I would like to say as far as my personal experience is concerned is, I've always been a person that likes to sit in the back and watch the panorama in front of me. If I sit in front, everything is behind me. I don't know what's going on. I like to see what's going on, so I like to sit in the back and I didn't mind at all when I first went into combat to fly number four in the last flight, which is Tail End Charlie, didn't mind at all because, let me tell you of what I saw. One day I was sitting in the cockpit and we were getting ready to take off and bombers who we would eventually catch up to because we were much faster than they, were passing overhead, just waves of them and waves of them and waves of them and waves of them. And later I found out the numbers would be something like nine hundred and some bombers and finally I saw some fighters going from the other fields taking off and I think the 332nd, I think we was the last group to take off. Not only were we the last group to take off but I was in the last squadron to take off, not only was I in the squadron to take off, I was the last man to take off. But anyway, we climbed, we climbed, we climbed, heading over into the enemy territory there and as we gained altitude, we were getting into our temperature zone where we started giving out these streamers that you see the airlines give out. It's a condensation trail. Well, we got up to a point in altitude, there were... I saw a sight that very few people would ever have the chance to see and

probably will never see again because they're not going to put up massive bombers like they did at that time and massive fighters. Nine hundred and some bombers, four hundred and some fighters, four engines on each bomber throwing out these vapor trails, nine hundred and some bombers times four engines and each engine on the four hundred and some fighters throwing out these vapor trails and they painted a ribbon across the blue sky was just something that leaves you awestruck. And I called that America standing tall. It was just a grand and glorious sight that I'll remember. Thank you very much.

Speaker 2: [inaudible] [0:41:38] 21 years, How many of you in the audience, know what a crew chief's responsibilities are [indiscernible] [0:41:55] responsibilities. What have we out here? Then I'll tell you something, if you were a pilot, you would know, you would know all about a crew chief, because the woman that I'm talking about, there was tags [indiscernible] [0:42:10] put her on the night so, like, we flew to Berlin the next day, it was the crew chief putting those tags on. Sometimes we worked all night, depending on the flight or whatever. [indiscernible] [0:42:23] I was in the 99th Fighter Squadron and we were like a family. I don't know if you can hit your bunch of GI's from all over the country, getting together and blending into something like a family. But we were not what the newspaper described, like, African American young people to be. We were professionals. In fact, we were so proud of our pilots, we'd work from camp to camp to make sure that they were going to be safe. Nobody, not even them, wanted to go up and shoot someone on the ground but we definitely didn't want to lose them because of our negligence. We were professionals and I think that with a leader like Colonel Davis, we tried to mentor him, we knew all the time what he wanted us to do. As far as our discipline, responsibility and professionalism, we were those professionals. Now, during the shootout that they mentioned, I was one of the crew chiefs. My aircraft, Colonel Harvis flew it, that was my aircraft, that was in the meet and it did real well, real well. In fact, I'm so proud of him. We went to Florida first of all to practice and from there we went to Las Vegas. Remember Colonel Stewart mentioned down in the Grand Canyon? Well, the mechanics and all the support people flew in at a C47 to Las Vegas, down in the canyon. Yeah, we flew down in the canyon looking up at the rim. It was quite a flight. But altogether, the prejudice was there, it's always there. In fact, if any of you in here know someone who's racially prejudiced and if you don't do anything about it, you're just as bad as they are. That's what Jim Chappy James said. He was the first black General in the Air Force. And I believe him, I believe that. You know, we have a great country here. We have what we like to tell everybody what's so great about us, but you know the chain is no stronger than its weakest link. When we get up and hear the National Anthem, salute and hold our heart with our hand, we don't think about how we may have impressed people or each other. You can't be strong if you're going to be a weak in, you know, social position with other races, and especially when you're prejudiced against races and color. Now, I'm sure that some of you have questions you'd like to ask us. We had a mechanic, I can answer a lot of questions, but don't ask me any hard ones. I can answer a lot of questions.

Audience: Let me ask, may I ask you, you were among the group that had first gone out and went into an integrated Air Force. How were you treated? Just how did you enjoy it and what were your thoughts?

Speaker 2: Good question. Six mechanics left [indiscernible] [0:46:47] on integration, transfers. Seven of us in all, but one of the best for us was like, administration specialist, a Master Sergeant. I was a Staff Sergeant, in fact, there were three Staff Sergeant and two Tesch Sergeant and one Master Sergeant. We went to Japan and well, before we went to Japan, we went to Hamilton Field to catch a boat, ship to Japan. And while we were there waiting for our transfer, the commander there asked, "Well you boys need something to do. I want you to clean up the base" "Clean up the base?" we all have first degrees in that, we have Sergeants, we don't do that anymore. So we wrote a letter to Washington and about two or three days later, we were on the boat. We were going on a boat. But we went to Japan and when we arrived there, we found out later that the commander at the base where we were to be stationed, which was at Izuki [indiscernible] [0:48:11]. I had told all the people in an assembly that we were coming. Somehow they get the word around. I think Colonel [indiscernible] [0:48:23] people told him we were coming. When we got there on the train, we got on, we saw all these GI's waiting on us, you know, a guy want to carry my bag, this was really too much. I couldn't understand what this was all about. But anyway, they were really nice people, really nice, because the commander had said we were coming, we were going to integrate and there wasn't going to be any problems. There weren't any problems. Then I got to thinking, that's the same thing our President Truman said. The Air Force is going to integrate and there wasn't going to be any problem. Now if one man can do that and say that, "Why was there so many problems so long? Why wasn't it ealier, or why didn't we do this earlier?" it definitely is neither here nor there. We all came in to the squadron and they had P51's. Now I just came from a P47 squadron, ones that were kind of unique. Here's a P51 but it's a hangar queen. You ever know what a hangar queen is? That's the aircraft that has been cannibalized just a bare minimal is left on it. They gave it to me. Okay, give me a lemon, I'll make lemonade. I took the parts catalogue, I sat down and ordered everything I needed. They eventually started coming in and I started replacing what had been removed. And that's a no, no in the Air Force today. Once you took something... you have to go through a lot of paperwork to remove a part because it may be something removed that no one knows about but you. You can't do, you can't [indiscernible] [0:50:18] anymore like that. But anyway, in those days, if you needed something, you go get... you get it off to hangar queen. So I got this airplane ready for flight, cleaned it up, it had been lying in dust and it paid off. The first jet that came at our squadron, they gave it to me. The first jet. I am the first African American crew chief on a jet aircraft in a combat zone. Okay? So, that to me, showed that, "Hey, this racial prejudice thing is just about gone." I don't know if you've heard of General Vandenberg, the air base is named after him. He came to our base and promoted everybody in our squadron. I said, "My goodness, this is good. It just get better all the time." I was getting better all the time. But anyway, some of you probably wondering if we had any problems, none worth mentioning.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]