

## TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, INC.

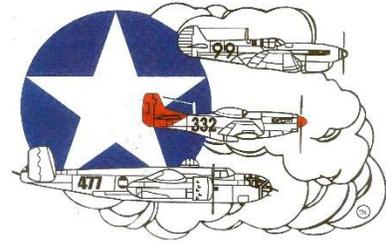
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# MEDIA KIT



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# Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.

## Fact Sheet

**Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. (TAI)** is a 501(c)(3), non-profit, national organization existing primarily to motivate and inspire young Americans to become participants in our nation's society and its democratic process. It also supports young men and women pursuing excellence, paying special attention to those interested in careers in aviation, technology and aerospace.

TAI is dedicated to keeping alive the history, achievements, and importance of the original Tuskegee Airmen.

The term, "Tuskegee Airmen," refers to the men and women, African-Americans and Caucasians, who were involved in the so-called "Tuskegee Experience", the Army Air Corps program to train African Americans to fly and maintain combat aircraft.

The Tuskegee Airmen included pilots, radio operators, navigators, bombardiers, aircraft maintenance, support staff, instructors, and all the personnel who kept the planes in the air.

Virtually all black military pilots during World War II received their primary flight training at Moton Field and then their basic and advanced flight training at Tuskegee Army Air Field (TAAF).

Moton Field, named for Robert Russa Moton, second president of Tuskegee Institute, was built between 1940 and 1942.

## **Mission**

TAI strives to increase understanding of the "Tuskegee Experience" by:

- Honoring the accomplishments and perpetuating the history of the men and women who participated in the "Tuskegee Experience" as air and ground crew operations and support in the Army Air Corps during World War II.
- Introducing young people across the nation to the world of aviation and science through local and national initiatives such as Young Eagles and TAI youth programs
- Providing awards to deserving individuals, groups and corporations whose deeds support TAI's mission, goals and objectives

## **Location**

**TAI** is headquartered in Tuskegee, Alabama (about 35 miles east of Montgomery), where the training of black military pilots during World War II began.

There are currently 54 active chapters of TAI located in major cities and military installations throughout the United States.

## Brief History

The Tuskegee Airmen were dedicated, determined men and women who enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps or served as civilian support staff in the “Tuskegee Experience.”

Three government initiatives occurred between 1938 and 1940 that were instrumental in paving the way for blacks to participate in the nation’s defense and to become military pilots.

- 1) In 1938, the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP), a new flight training initiative sponsored by the federal government, was launched to increase the number of civilian pilots. This program gave many black college students a chance to earn their private pilot license. Several black colleges, including Tuskegee Institute, participated in the program. However, learning to fly in the CPTP was different than becoming a military aviator in the Army Air Corps.
- 2) In 1940, Congress passed the Selective Service and Training Service Act, which was signed into law by President Franklin Roosevelt on September 16, 1940. This act, which was also known as the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, was the first peace-time draft in U.S. history. It required all American males between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five to register for the draft. The final version of the bill contained two provisions, 3(a) and 4(a), which spoke to the discrimination question:

*a. Section 3(a) stated – “Within the limits of the quota determined...Any person regardless of race or*

*color...shall be afforded an opportunity to volunteer for induction...and*

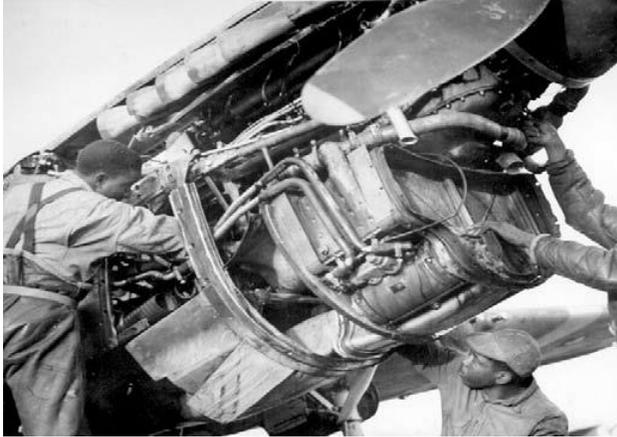
*b. Section 4(a) stated – “In the selection and training of men under this Act, and in the interpretation and execution of the provision of this Act, there shall be no discrimination against any person on account of race or color.”*

- 3) That same year, the War Department announced that the Civil Aeronautics Authority, in cooperation with the U.S. Army, would begin development of “colored personnel” for the aviation service. This paved the way for blacks to train as pilots and vital support personnel.

These men and women came from every part of the country. Each one of them possessed a strong personal desire to serve the United States of America to the best of their ability.

The first aviation class of 13 cadets began July 19, 1941, with ground school training covering subjects such as meteorology, navigation, and instruments. Successful cadets then transferred to the segregated Tuskegee Army Air Field (TAAF) to complete the Army Air Corps pilot training. The Air Corps provided aircraft, textbooks, pilot and mechanic uniforms, and parachutes. Tuskegee Institute furnished the facilities for the aircraft and personnel. The Army Air Corps (Army Air Forces) provided facilities, equipment and supplies for men and planes at TAAF, the largest of the flying training bases. Lt. Col. Noel F. Parrish served as the base commander from 1942 to 1946.

In March 1942, five of the 13 cadets in the first class completed the Army Air Corps pilot training program, earning their silver wings and becoming the nation's first black military pilots. They were Second Lieutenants Lemuel R. Curtis, Charles DeBow, Mac Ross, George Spencer Roberts, and Captain Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., a West Point Academy graduate.



Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. later became leader of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II and the first black to earn the rank of General in the U.S. Air Force. While Col. "B. O." Davis was the most famous of the 99th Fighter Squadron commanders, he was not the first. He was preceded by George S. Roberts, who was the first black commander of that unit and, for that matter, of any black flying unit.

Of the pilots who trained at TAAF, 355 served overseas with the 99th Pursuit Squadron (later the 99th Fighter Squadron) and the 332nd Fighter Group.

The 332nd Fighter Group was officially activated on October 13, 1942, at TAAF. The Group was comprised of the 100th Fighter Squadron, the 301st Fighter Squadron, and the 302nd Fighter Squadron.

Between 1944 and 1945, dozens of black officers served as commanders of the 99th, 100th, 301st, and 302nd Fighter Squadrons. A more complete listing of those individuals, the units and time frames in which they served can be found on the TAI website at [www.tuskegeeairmen.org](http://www.tuskegeeairmen.org).

In addition to training fighter pilots, Tuskegee graduated a group of twin-engine pilots. They were assigned to the 477th Bombardment Group and flew the B-25 Mitchell bomber, a twin-engine, medium bomber. The Group was activated with four bombardment squadrons; the 616th, 617th, 618th, and 619th. However, the war against Japan ended before the 477th Group could be deployed overseas.



On June 21, 1945, Col. Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. assumed command of the 477th Bombardment Group. The 477th Bombardment Group became the 477th Composite Group when the 99th Fighter Squadron was assigned to it that summer, making it a composite of both fighter and bombardment squadrons. In March 1946, the unit relocated to Lockbourne Army Air Base in Ohio. When the 477th was

inactivated in 1947, the inactive 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group—later known as the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing, was activated at the same base.

Throughout their training at Tuskegee, no training standards were lowered for pilots or any of the others in the fields of meteorology, intelligence, engineering, medicine, and other support positions



From 1941 to 1946, approximately 1,000 pilots graduated from TAAF, receiving their commissions and pilot wings. The black navigators, bombardiers, and gunnery crews were trained at other selected military bases elsewhere in the U.S. Mechanics were initially trained at Chanute Air Base in Rantoul, IL, until facilities were in place at TAAF in 1942.

“Tuskegee Airmen” include men and women who were involved in the “Tuskegee Military Experiment” from 1941 to 1946. The “experiment” is now referred to as the “Tuskegee Experience” by Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.

The Tuskegee Airmen "Experience" extends up to 1949 and includes all individuals, men and women, blacks and whites who supported aircraft in the air and on the ground as bombardiers, maintenance and



support staff, instructors, and all other personnel at TAAF and other designated units or locations until inactivation of the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing at Lockbourne Army Air Base (later designated Lockbourne Air Force Base).



Nurses in the Army Air Corps as part of the Tuskegee Experience

When the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing and its group and squadrons were inactivated in 1949, their personnel were assigned to other, formerly all-white, units. This resulted in desegregation of the Air Force.

The term “Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen” or “DOTA” was adopted by TAI and includes vetted personnel who trained or were stationed at TAAF and other designated units or locations during the period from 1941 to 1949.

## After the War

After the war in Europe ended in 1945, the black airmen and support personnel returned to the U.S., where they continued to face racism and bigotry despite their outstanding war record.

The Tuskegee program was expanded to become the center for black aviation during World War II. TAAF continued to train new airmen until 1946.

Large numbers of black airmen chose to remain in the service, but because of segregation were limited to the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group and 477<sup>th</sup> Composite Group—later the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing at Lockbourne Army Air Base (later designated Lockbourne Air Force Base). Opportunities for advancement and promotion were also very limited, which affected morale. Nonetheless, black airmen and those in other fields continued to perform superbly.

During this period, many white units were undermanned and needed qualified people but were unable to get experienced black personnel because of the segregation policy. The newly-formed U.S. Air Force began plans to integrate its units as early as 1947; however, integration did not occur until 1949.

In 1948, President Harry Truman enacted Executive Order 9981, which directed equality of

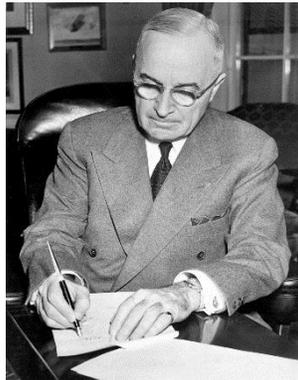
treatment and opportunity to all in the U.S. armed forces. In time, this Order led to the end of racial segregation in the military and set the stage for racial integration in other areas of American society.

The “Tuskegee Experience” achieved success rather than the expected failure. This is further evidenced by the elevation of three of the pioneers to flag rank – Gen. Daniel “Chappie” James, our nation’s first black Four-Star General; Lt. Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., and Maj. Lucius Theus. Davis retired as Lt. General from the U.S. Air Force in 1970 and was the senior black officer in the armed forces at that time. In 1998, President Bill Clinton awarded Gen. Davis his fourth star, advancing him to full General during a historic pinning ceremony.

The Tuskegee Airmen will live on forever in the pages of history because they accepted the challenge proudly and succeeded in proving to the world that blacks could fly. Throughout their exploits, they performed

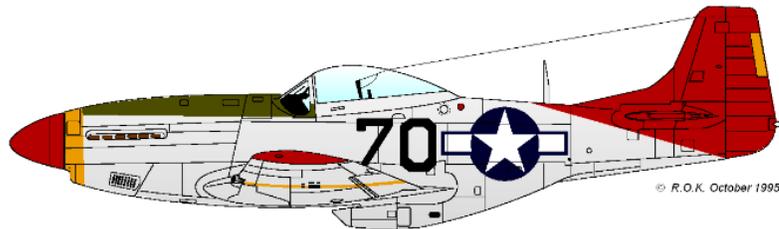
their duties with skill and determination, rising above the humiliation and indignation of racism and bigotry.

They fought two wars – one against a military enemy force overseas and another against racism at home.



## Some Tuskegee Airmen Statistics

- The Tuskegee Airmen flew more than 1,200 missions for the 99<sup>th</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup>, 301<sup>st</sup>, and 302<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Squadrons under the Twelfth Air Force.
- Civilian pilot training in the Tuskegee area began in January 1941. The first black flying unit, originally called the 99<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron (now known as the 99<sup>th</sup> Flying Training Squadron), was first activated on March 22, 1941. It was designed to be a flying unit even though it did not initially have any pilots. In other words, one might say that there were no “Tuskegee Airmen” before 1941.
- The 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group flew at least 312 missions for the Fifteenth Air Force between early June 1944 and May 1945. When the pilots of the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group painted the tails of their P-47s and later, P-51s, red, the nickname "Red Tails" was coined. Bomber crews applied a more effusive "Red-Tail Angels."



- The 99<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron and the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group had a total of 112 aerial victories during World War II.
- Ninety-six Distinguished Flying Crosses were awarded to members of the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group or its squadrons.
- The 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group shot down enemy aircraft on 21 missions for the Fifteenth Air Force.
- The Tuskegee airmen flew four different types of aircraft in combat; the P-40, P-39, P-47, and P-51.
- Four Tuskegee Airmen earned three aerial victory credits in one day; Joseph Elsberry, Clarence Lester, Lee Archer, and Harry Stewart.
- The 99<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron earned three Distinguished Unit Citations, and the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group earned one. The 99<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron earned two Distinguished Unit Citations before it was assigned to the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group.



## More Noteworthy Accomplishments

- The “Tuskegee Military Experiment,” now referred to by TAI as the “Tuskegee Experience,” was conducted by the U.S. War Department and the Army Air Corps from 1941 to 1946. *(NOTE: The “Tuskegee Experience” should not be confused with the “Tuskegee Syphilis-Experiment” that was conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) from 1932 to 1972. Both events occurred in Tuskegee, AL, but at different locations).*
- Kennedy Field is where civilian pilot training began in the Tuskegee area in January 1941. It was located approximately 5 miles south of Tuskegee and predated both Moton Field and Tuskegee Army Air Field.
- In April 1941, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt traveled to Kennedy Field, where she accepted an offer to fly with Charles A. “Chief” Anderson, a black pilot and the first black pilot instructor at Tuskegee. The First Lady’s flight catapulted the training at Tuskegee to the forefront.
- On August 3, 1944, twelve black officers led by Captain Willard B. Ransom entered the west dining room of the Tuskegee Army Air Field Post Exchange restaurant, which had been reserved for white officers, and demanded service. When 2nd Lt. George D Frye, Assistant Exchange Officer, asked the black officers to go to the larger east dining room reserved for them, Captain Ransom showed Frye two War Department letters that noted service at base recreational facilities and post exchanges would not be denied any personnel because of race. With Col. Noel Parrish's support, Lt. Frye agreed to let the black officers be served in the west dining room, effectively integrating the restaurant without violence. Many white officers stopped eating at the facility. The elimination rate for black cadets increased. Some white officers asked for transfers, and within two months, Tuskegee Army Air Field received its first black flight instructors. Col. Parrish assured the white leadership of nearby towns that integration of the base facilities would not affect areas outside the base. Parrish's handling of the integration crisis at Tuskegee Army Air Field contrasted sharply with the later Freeman Field Mutiny of April 1945. (History of Tuskegee Army Air Field, 1 July to 31 August 1944, pp. 12-15, call number 289.28-5 at the Air Force Historical Research Agency).
- In April 1945, members of the 477<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group at Freeman Field Airport near Seymour, Indiana, were arrested for trying to desegregate an all-white officers club. The incident resulted in the arrest of 104 black officers, some of them twice. Three were court-martialed on relatively minor charges and one was convicted. This is referred to as the Freeman Field Mutiny.



- In August 1995, fifteen Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen officers who were assigned to the 477<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group at Freeman Army Airfield in Indiana received official notification during the 1995 TAI convention in Atlanta that the military records of all those involved in the incident at Freeman Field were cleared of any reference to the Freeman Field Mutiny.
- Although President Truman's Executive Order 9981 was issued in 1948, the military services were not immediately implemented. In 1949, a year after the President's executive order, the Air Force was the first service to integrate.
- The pilot training at TAAF ended on June 29, 1946, and the base closed on June 12, 1947. The all-black 332nd Fighter Wing, the 332nd Fighter Group assigned to it, and the 99th, 100th, and 301st Fighter Squadrons, were all inactivated on July 1, 1949. These were the only black flying units in the USAF at the time. When they were inactivated, their personnel were reassigned to formerly all-white units. They were later re-activated, but not as black organizations. (The 302nd Fighter Squadron had already been inactivated in March 1945.) The reassignment of the personnel of the all-black flying organizations to formerly all-white flying organizations was the most important step toward racial integration in the USAF.
- On March 29, 2007, during a ceremony inside the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol, President George W. Bush announced the award by Congress of the Congressional Gold Medal\* to the Tuskegee Airmen as a group. The ceremony was attended by 300 representatives of the 16,000 to 19,000 men and women who were part of the “Tuskegee Experience” of World War II. Among those in attendance were Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen (DOTAs).
- The National Aviation Hall of Fame enshrined two Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen; Col Charles McGee (2011) and Charles “Chief” Alfred Anderson (2013).



\*Congressional Gold Medal (front and back) awarded to the Tuskegee Airmen

## Some Common Misconceptions about the Tuskegee Airmen

### “All African-Americans in the U. S. Army Air Forces in WW II Were Tuskegee Airmen”

Many African-Americans served in the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II, but not all of them were part of the “Tuskegee Experience.” Some of those who served belonged to engineer aviation battalions that built airfields all over the world.

### “Never Lost a Bomber to Enemy Aircraft” Claim (2010 TAI Position Statement)

“The results of the extensive research investigations by several independent investigators in reviewing the records of the 332nd Fighter Group and all other fighter groups of 15th Air Force, 15th AF Bomber Wings and Groups, and Missing Air Crew (MAC) Reports at the Air Force Historical Research Agency and the National Archives, revealed that some bombers were lost to enemy aircraft while being escorted by the 332nd Fighter Group during the period of June 1, 1944 to the end of the war. Regardless of these latest findings, the 332nd FG still had an outstanding combat record (that) inspired revolutionary reform in the (United States) Armed Forces.”

“Furthermore, it is requested that all ‘Tuskegee Airmen’ and other Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. members and personnel

discontinue making any statement which implies that the 332nd Fighter Group ‘Never lost a bomber to enemy aircraft.’



And it is further recommended, for good public relations, they correct others that have been misinformed or who are making incorrect statements.” (Reprinted from TAI January 2011 newsletter)

### “There are Second Generation Tuskegee Airmen”

TAI celebrates and honors those who served and their family members. To set the records straight, there is no such thing as “second generation Tuskegee Airmen.” The term, “Tuskegee Airmen,” refers to those men and women who participated in the Tuskegee Experience of World War II. Offspring and other relatives of those individuals cannot be “second generation Tuskegee Airmen” because there was only one generation of Tuskegee Airmen.

## Membership in TAI

Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. (TAI) was founded in Detroit, Michigan in 1972, bringing an end to nearly thirty years of anonymity of the brave men and women who were part of the “Tuskegee Experience” during World War II. TAI is a non-military, non-profit entity that exists primarily to motivate and inspire young Americans to become participants in our nation’s society and democratic process.

TAI membership is open to men and women of all races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientation, abilities, and socio-economic

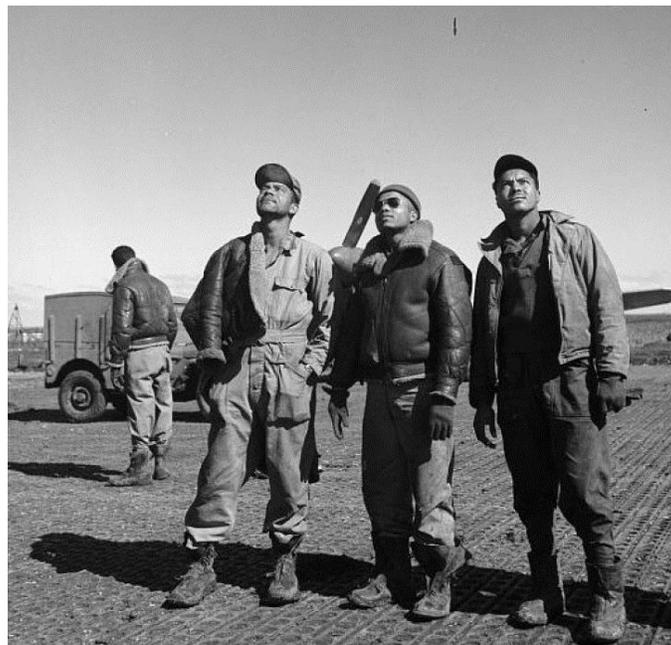
status. TAI’s membership includes civilians, veterans, active duty and retired military personnel from all branches of the service.

We invite anyone interested in helping to continue the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen to join us by contacting a TAI chapter for more information.

Visit [www.tuskegeeairmen.org](http://www.tuskegeeairmen.org) and click on [Explore TAI](#) to locate a chapter near you, or submit your request on the “[Contact Us](#)” page.

## Donations and Planned Giving

Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. is a non-profit, 501(c)(3), tax-exempt organization. TAI accepts gifts of stock, pledges through bequests, trusts, and other planned giving.



# Tuskegee Airmen

## Museums and Historical Sites

Several memorials in the U.S. are dedicated to the memory of the Tuskegee Airmen—who they were, why they were, and what they accomplished during and after the adverse conditions to which they were subjected at home and abroad. These sites include:

**Memorial Park at the Air Force Museum**  
Wright-Patterson AFB  
Dayton, Ohio

**Tuskegee Airmen Statue in the Honor Park**  
U. S. Air Force Academy  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

**Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site**  
**National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior**  
Moton Field in Tuskegee Visitor Center  
Chappie James Avenue, Tuskegee, Alabama

**Tuskegee Heritage Museum**  
109 Westside Street, Tuskegee, Alabama

**George Washington Carver Museum**  
Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama

**Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site Quarter**  
The site quarter will be the last strike and the 56<sup>th</sup> and final coin in the U.S. Mint's  
“America the Beautiful Quarters Program” series.

Sources:

*The National Park Service;* [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

*Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.;* [www.tuskegeearmen.org](http://www.tuskegeearmen.org)

*(Public Law 783, Sept 16, 1940; War Department Press Release; 99<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron summary history in the lineage and honors folder of the 99<sup>th</sup> Flying Training Squadron at the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), Maxwell AFB, AL)*

*(Alan L. Gropman, The Air Force Integrates; 1945-1964 (Washington, DC; Office of Air Force History, 1985], p. 243, and note from Dr. Gropman to Dr. Haulman, June 14, 2010)*

*(Maurer, Combat Squadrons of the Air Force, World War II, Maurer, Air Force Combat Units of World War II)*

*Photos –* [www.nationalmuseum.af.mil](http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil)

*U.S. Army Center of Military History;* <http://www.history.army.mil/>

*Law Library of Congress;* [www.loc.gov/law](http://www.loc.gov/law)

## TAI Media Kit – General Interview Questions

- What were your motivations for joining the military?
- Did you have a choice to join the unique Tuskegee Experience or was it simply a matter of assignment?
- Did you go to Tuskegee? If so, what were your duties (primary and additional)?
- If not Tuskegee, where did you go for training and to what unit/units were you assigned?
- What were your feelings as WW II ended and the word of an integrated military was on the horizon?
- What are your thoughts on the progress that was made through the efforts of the Tuskegee Airmen?
- Is there a solid foundation in place to ensure the Tuskegee Airmen and their contributions are not forgotten?
- What was the high point of your WW II service?
- What was the low point of your WW II service?
- Who were your heroes of WW II?
- How would you describe the effectiveness of the Red Tail leadership?
- How do you feel integration affected USAF effectiveness?