



## Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.

# Buford A. Johnson Chapter Newsletter

October, 2015

### October Meeting Elections

Our October meeting will take place on Saturday, October 10<sup>th</sup> at the Altura Credit Union (formerly Visterra Credit Union) located at Graham and Cactus in Moreno Valley. We will be electing a new vice-president, treasurer, financial secretary, assistant secretary, and historian. To qualify as a candidate, a member must have been an active member for at least six months. An active member must attend meetings regularly and join us in activities. Dues must be current. Members who have paid their dues may vote. We will also discuss the changes to the bylaws that were passed out earlier. Please join us at this meeting. A description of job duties and requirements will be sent to members separately. At this time, Ms. Marva X has agreed to run for vice-president, and Mr. Buford Johnson has agreed to run for historian. Please join us on Saturday.

### 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Military Appreciation Picnic

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, March ARB held a Military Appreciation Picnic at Curtis LeMay Park. Attending were Jackie Jempson, Buford Johnson, Bill Richards, and Edison Marshall. A special thank you goes out to Mr. Richard's fiancée, Maggie, who took the pictures.



Mr. Marshall (second from left) and Mr. Johnson (far right) pose with admirers



Front row: Mr. Marshall, Mr. Johnson, Col. Smith  
Back row: Bill Richards, and a young lady pose for pictures



Mr. Johnson and Mr. Marshall speak with military families. Mr. Richards is standing behind Mr. Johnson.

### Meeting Dr. Thurston Gaines, Original Tuskegee Airman

In September, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Berry, Mr. Fleming, Mr. Ward, Mr. Marshall, and Mrs. Marshall met with Dr. and Mrs. Thurston Gaines at the VA Loma Linda Hospital. Dr. Gaines was a pilot and is a documented original Tuskegee Airman.

Dr. Thurston Gaines was born and raised in Freeport, Long Island, New York. He was drafted into the U.S. Army Air Corps in April, 1943. He was assigned to Tuskegee Army Airfield, Alabama and graduated as a flight officer in Class 44-G.

Dr. Gaines was deployed to Europe in January, 1945 where he joined the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group. He flew in combat against the German Luftwaffe in February, 1945.

In April, 1945, he was shot down on his 45<sup>th</sup> mission while strafing enemy targets. Dr. Gaines survived two jails and a prison camp. He was repatriated in June of 1945 and returned to

Tuskegee to become an instructor pilot. This was followed by an assignment to Lockbourne.

After four years total service, he returned to civilian life where he attended college at New York University. After graduating, he entered Meharry Medical College in 1949. Dr. Gaines earned his medical degree in June of 1953.

After 45 years in the medical field, Dr. Gaines retired, only to return to work nine years later as a phlebotomist. He then became an adjunct professor at Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Tempe, AZ. He then became a substitute teacher at the elementary level.

He has been married to his wife Jackie for more than 60 years. They were married in Tuskegee, Alabama while he was stationed there.

Meeting this very special couple was a wonderful experience.



Mrs. Jackie Gaines and Dr. Thurston Gaines



Mrs. Gaines shakes hands with President Donald Fleming



DOTAs Dr. Thurston Gaines and Buford A. Johnson enjoy a conversation



Dr. Gaines and Mr. Johnson

### Spotlight on Youth



Youth member, Michael Thomas, called to tell us that he was leaving for Cal Poly Pomona. Michael hopes to become an officer in the Air Force and then to pursue a career in the aerospace industry. We wish him well and hope that he will be able to attend meetings when his busy schedule allows.