



Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.

Buford A. Johnson Chapter Newsletter

January, 2017

January Meeting

Our January Meeting will occur on Saturday, January 14th at the Altura Credit Union. The time is 10:00 AM sharp. We will discuss scholarship applications. We will also collect dues for 2017. We hope to see you there.

Happy New Year



The board of the Buford A. Johnson Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. wishes all of you a blessed New Year.

Membership

The membership renewal continues. The dues are \$60 for each year. Membership goes from January of each year until the last day of December regardless of which month dues were paid. Dues paid late in the year are held until the next year. We need to have at least ten paid members in order to submit scholarship applications. Each member must fill out a new membership application each year.

Scholarship Applications



Scholarship applications are due this month. If you have left applications at schools, please visit the schools and follow up to see if

any are ready. Return completed packets to Edison T. Marshall so that they can be evaluated. If we receive them early enough, we can contact the applicant to correct any omissions or mistakes. Only five can go forward, but we are building a separate account to offer education assistance to some who are deserving, but do not make the cut. The scholarships are open only to graduating seniors who live in our area.

Mr. Gregg Landolt from Flabob Airport Visits BAJTAI



Mr. Landolt speaks to the chapter.

Mr. Gregg Landolt from Flabob Airport spoke to the membership in December about the youth programs available at Flabob Airport. The Airport, which is located in Jurupa, California conducts many programs for the youth of the area.

Mr. Tom Wathen bought the airport in 2000. The nonprofit Tom Wathen Center is dedicated to education through aviation. Mr.

Wathen believes that aviation is a “powerful stimulus” to learning, especially in the STEM subjects of science, engineering, technology, and math. The courses also emphasize civic obligation and leadership. While the education of secondary students is emphasized, programs have been offered to all ages from preschool on.

Flabob Airport was founded in 1925. It offers field trips, air academics, aircraft restoration programs, programs for aviators, a Pilot Grant program, and youth opportunity programs.



Mr. Landolt showed a power point presentation to illustrate the programs.

The Pilot Grant program has afforded youth to earn pilot licenses. The Youth Opportunity Program requires students to attend the school. They are given a minimum wage. For the Young Eagles program, which is affiliated with the EAA, all the youth need is a pair of closed-toed shoes, a signed permission slip, and a willingness to learn. The program is free. On the second Saturday of each month, youth are taken up in airplanes. This program is free. Air academics are also offered. At these academies, young people are given a more in-depth education about aviation. The EAA can be joined for a small fee for each year. Mr. Landolt suggested that we could bring a group of 25 youth to the airport for a field trip.

The chapter will look into opportunities for youth at this airport in the future.

Members interested in contacting the Wathen Center about their programs can call 951-683-2309 weekdays between 8:00 AM and 3:30 PM.

Tuskegee Airmen

The term Tuskegee Airmen is not only applied to the almost 1,000 pilots, but also to the approximately 13,600 personnel who served with them in the Army Air Corps. This included armorers, bombardiers, engineers, navigators, mechanics, medical personnel, and maintenance and supply personnel. Some of these support personnel were women.

Because of unease in the late 1930s over war between Europe and Asia, the federal government decided to expand air defenses. The common view held by whites prior to WWII was that blacks could not make good pilots. Because of this, blacks were not allowed to fly in the military.

The NAACP and the black press pushed for a greater role for blacks in America’s military and were successful.

Before their training began, most Tuskegee Airmen were not in the military. To be considered for pilot training, applicants were required to be college graduates and were expected to be officers. At that time, Tuskegee had the only training facility for black pilots. The training, which began at Moton Field, was moved to the larger Tuskegee Army Airfield between Tuskegee and Tallassee.

Many prospective pilots did not graduate from all of the phases of training there and did not become combat pilots in WWII. They were given other assignments.

In 1948, Executive Order 9981 was issued by President Harry S. Truman. This order mandated racial integration of all military services. Eventually the Navy and the Marines would also have black pilots in addition to the

Air Force pilots. The Tuskegee Airmen paved the way for them all.

**Lonely Eagle
Dr. Thurston Gaines**



Thurston Gaines as a Tuskegee Airman and in later years



Dr. Thurston Gaines (left) and Buford A. Johnson (right) at the VA hospital in Loma Linda

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of original Tuskegee Airman Dr. Thurston L. Gaines, Jr. He was a former resident of Litchfield Park and Sun City West, AZ. He was a founding member of the Archer-Ragsdale Arizona Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. Recently, he lived in Murrieta, California.

Dr. Gaines was married for nearly 73 years to his wife Jacqueline Gaines. He is also survived by three children.

Dr. Gaines was born and raised in Freeport, Long Island, NY. Though he was denied the opportunity to take college preparatory classes, he earned a scholarship to Drake University in Iowa. However, he chose to apply to Howard University. He was accepted on a student/work program scholarship that allowed him to work during the day and take algebra and geometry at night.

As the United States became involved in WWII, he knew he “didn’t want to carry a rifle.” He applied and was accepted into the All Negro Cadet Corps at Tuskegee Army Airfield. He graduated one year later as a 2/Lt. Flight Officer in Class 44G.

He was assigned to the 99th Pursuit Squadron and deployed to Europe in January, 1945 where he flew the P-51 Mustang. He began flying combat missions against the German Luftwaffe in February, 1945. On April 15, 1945, he was shot down by anti-aircraft fire on his 25th combat mission over Germany. He was captured and held prisoner in German jails and in one prison camp before being liberated in June, 1945 by Patton’s 14th Armored Division. In meeting with us, he said he was fairly well-treated by the Germans.

Dr. Gaines received many military honors including the Purple Heart and was present at the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal in Washington, DC.

After serving with distinction for four years, Dr. Gaines returned to civilian life. He

enrolled in New York University and graduated in 1948. He spent the rest of his life in a medical career.