

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Chapter President George Watson congratulates Scholarship Winner Ambrose Decilap

The Chapter is honored to present this year's scholarship to a young man who has great ambition. Ambrose plans to continue his education and get a medical degree. He greatly appreciates being honored by the Tuskegee Airmen and vows not to let them down. He says he will work very hard, continue to get good grades and will keep in touch with the Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen.

- The Annual Tuskegee Airmen Celebration, presented by the University of California, Riverside Libraries and the Tuskegee Archive, will be held on November 5, 2011. Zellie Rainey Orr will give a presentation on the Top Gun Competition held in 1949 won by the Tuskegee Airmen. The three surviving members of the team will be honored. Please plan to attend.
- See the long lost Top Gun Trophy won by the Tuskegee Airmen in 1949, page 8.
- See Pages 11 and 12. What the Federal and State Governments are doing for/to you.—Ron E. Lacey
- If you have never heard of the Marine Corps Law Enforcement Foundation, read the article by Chapter member Christine Epstein on page 10.

CAPTAIN CLAUDE ROWE AN AVIATOR UNIQUE THE ONLY TUSKEGEE AIRMEN AUTHORIZED TO WEAR THE WINGS OF TWO COUNTRIES



By Claude A. Rowe
As told to granddaughter, Claudia Marwan

As a youngster, when people would ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up, of course my answer was "I want to be a pilot!" With Selfridge Air National Guard Base near Detroit, where I lived, I used to watch the planes fly over on my way to school. I had my mind set from a very young age, and was not going to settle for less, despite the color of my skin.

When I was in high school, I was offered the option of an aviation class or an auto mechanics class. I wanted to take aviation in order to begin my mission of becoming a pilot. Unfortunately, my teacher said they would never let a colored man be a military pilot, so I was directed to the auto mechanics class.

Just a couple of years after I graduated, the war began. I knew it was not only a chance to

fulfill my destiny, but also an opportunity to fight for my country. I left the Lawrence Institute of Technology and headed to the local military recruiting office to join the line of men waiting to sign up. When I got to the front, and they told me that my only choice would be to serve as a cook, I took my application and headed for the door. There was only one option I wanted, and that was to fly and fight for the right side.

Having seen advertisements around Detroit for the Royal Canadian Air Force, and not knowing if and when colored pilots would ever be allowed in the United States, I headed north to

part of such an unprecedented experience. That was what I had been waiting to hear my entire life, the chance to fly and fight for our country! There were some tough times; being that it was nearly a colorless military at the time, we were segregated to all-colored bases. At certain other bases, we were not even allowed to go to the Officers Club, and white airmen were reluctant to salute colored officers. It was routine to be separated, and although the discrimination was uncomfortable, we were too determined to let that stop us. We were not just fighting for our country, we were fighting for our dreams, and we were willing to give our lives for it.

The military was integrated in 1948, and that made things somewhat easier; it was another step toward being recognized for what we did rather than the color of our skins. We were given more opportunities to fly larger, more powerful planes. The bigger the plane, the more I liked it! I absolutely loved flying the WB-50, a four-engine heavy bomber, a military spy plane. It was one such plane that helped discover the fact that the Russians had nuclear weapons after discovering radiation in their airspace. Being in the air gave you a sense of freedom you never felt on land.

After serving for over 20 years, I retired from the U.S. Air Force with the rank of captain. Despite fighting in wars across the world, and a war for equality in my own country, I met my beautiful wife while stationed in England in November 1949. I have the Tuskegee Experience to thank for a lot of wonderful things in my life (including eight children and 18 grandchildren!), and paving the way for change in our country.

B-50 Medium Bomber. Other models were used for reconnaissance, weather and refuelers.



Captain Rowe's flight training class in Canada



A very young Sergeant Pilot -Claude Rowe

Canada. Since I was the only black man in my class up there, I was naturally integrated with the white pilots. After I received my wings, I returned to the United States.

Nathaniel Carr, a good friend of mine from high school, told me about the Tuskegee program. I leapt at the chance

to be a

A TUSKEGEE AIRMAN WITH A DIFFERENCE

by Jerry A. White, Historian
501st Combat Support Wing

2/4/2009 - **ROYAL AIR FORCE ALCONBURY, England** -- While the Tuskegee Airmen story has become part of our heritage, there are many unusual individual journeys still not well known.

One of these journeys is of a graduate of the Royal Canadian Air Force, the only known Tuskegee Airman to finish two demanding flight training programs and wear both sets of wings.

Claude Rowe was born and raised in the Detroit area and wanted to fly but opportunities in the Army Air Forces for African-Americans in World War II were almost non-existent, unless you were fortunate enough to get a slot at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

Looking at Canada across the lake, Claude knew there was another option and followed several thousand Americans across the border to Canada. During World War II, at least 8,800 Americans trained as pilots and a small number of them happened to be black.

The RCAF, as part of the British Commonwealth, was a major contributor to the RAF's success, if not survival, training almost 50,000 pilots and more than 87,000 other aircrew during World War II.

Winning his wings and graduating as a sergeant pilot in late 1944, the war was drawing to a close and Americans were being sent back to the AAF or discharged. Finding himself back in Detroit, he was accepted for pilot training and, in mid-1946, Rowe qualified as a twin-engine pilot and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the last pilot training class to graduate at Tuskegee.



28th Weather Squadron Detachment 28-1, Burtonwood Depot, 1951; then-Lt Rowe at far left, front row.

(USAF photo)

WHAT WERE YOU DOING SEPTEMBER 11, 2001?

By Oscar D. Teel

It was my birthday, September 11, 2001, and as usual I got up and turned the television on. I was sure I was watching a movie. It wasn't long before reality, accompanied by disbelief, set in. It didn't seem possible that someone would fly planes full of passengers into building. Hijacking planes was a thing of the past. We had become complacent. No air marshals on board. Too costly. Who hates Americans that much?

The following article appeared in our December 2001 issue of *By Request*.

In Honor and Memory of
LeRoy Homer
First Officer, United Airlines
Flight 93
August 27, 1965 -September 11, 2001
"So long as we live,
they too shall live,
for they are now a part of us,
as we remember them"
(A sacred prayer)



Captain Leroy W. Homer, Jr.

(Captain Homer was made an Honorary
Tuskegee Airmen)

LeRoy developed his love of airplanes at a very young age. As a little boy he would go with his dad to watch airplanes taking off and landing. By the time he was sixteen he was licensed to fly small planes.

LeRoy graduated from the Air Force Academy class of 1987, 31st Squadron. LeRoy served his country as a captain in the Air Force, flying the C-141 Starlifter, and was a Veteran of Desert Storm.

LeRoy married Melodie Thorpe on May 24, 1998 in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. From that union, their daughter Laurel Nicole was born October 25, 2000.

LeRoy was known for his kind, caring disposition. He was the type of person who truly listened when you spoke. He was an exceptional individual with a wonderful sense of humor.

LeRoy is survived by his wife Melodie, daughter Laurel, mother Ilse, brother Thomas-Freimark Sr., sisters Marilyn Johnson, Germaine Wilson, Theresa Cooke-Poche Ramirez, Cheryl Homer-Wilson, Monique Homer, Christine (Kiki) Homer and Michelle Homer, as well as his mother-in-law and father-in-law, brothers-in-law, nieces, nephews and cousins.

An Education Fund has been set up for LeRoy's Daughter. Contributions can be sent to:

The LeRoy Homer Fund
c/o Commerce Bank
336 Route 70 East
Marlton, NJ 08053

Above article is a reprint with permission of the Organization of Black Airline Pilots (OBAP).

Photo provided through courtesy of Martin J. Hnatov

For more information see the article about Captain Homer on Wikipedia.com.

MCKINLEY: AMERICA MUST PRESERVE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN'S LEGACY



General Craig R. McKinley,
Chief, National Guard Bureau

As the accomplishments of the World War II-era Tuskegee Airmen fade into U.S. history, a grateful nation must work to keep their legacy alive, the **chief of the National Guard Bureau** said at the 40th annual Tuskegee Airmen convention.

"The reality of human behavior is that the further in time we get from an event in history, the further it slips from our memory," Gen. Craig R. McKinley said Aug. 5 at the gathering of the group named for the nation's first African-American fighter pilots at National Harbor,

Md. "I don't want to see this happen to the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen."

The military made a tangible step in preserving the unit's heritage when in 2007 the 187th Fighter Wing of the Alabama Air National Guard deactivated its 160th Fighter Squadron and reactivated it as the 100th Fighter Squadron in honor of the Tuskegee Airmen, said McKinley, who was director of the Air National Guard at the time. But, there is more the military and the nation can do to preserve and replicate their legacy, he said.

McKinley spoke of the airmen's commitment to service, noting that it came during a time of Jim Crow segregation laws when "this country was telling African-Americans they couldn't stay in the same hotels as white people, they couldn't attend the same schools as white people, and in some cases, they couldn't even enter a building through the same door as white people.

"Why then would the Tuskegee Airmen in the 1940s choose to fight for our country?" the general asked. "I'll bet that if you asked the original Tuskegee Airmen ... a common answer would be commitment to service and preserving our nation for the next generation to make it better."

All service members can carry on the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen by striving for excellence, McKinley said. He noted the accomplishments of the airmen, which include more than 16,000 combat sorties with 115 German aircraft destroyed in the air and another 150 on the ground, and 950 German vehicles destroyed. Their commendations include three Distinguished Unit Citations, about 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, at least one Silver Star, 14 Bronze Stars, 748 Air Medals and eight Purple Hearts.

"If you want an example of excellence, there it is," McKinley said.

The military can do more to carry on the Tuskegee Airmen's legacy, he said, by conducting outreach to make more young people eligible for recruitment. Pentagon statistics

show that three out of four Americans ages 17 through 24, and more often minorities, cannot be recruited due to inadequate education, health problems or criminal history, he said.

The services also must continue with efforts to promote diversity as a core value, making its leadership as diverse as America, and hold senior officers accountable for progress, McKinley said.

Also, the general said, the nation needs to prime its young people to maintain U.S. superiority in science and technology, noting increased competition from China, Russia, Canada and Brazil in aviation and aerospace.

"We have to ask ourselves, who is going to design America's unmanned aerial vehicle technology of the future?" he said. "Who will build the next stealth bomber? Who will go to Mars?"

With fewer and fewer Americans having a family member who served in the military, McKinley said, service members and veterans must serve as the example. And, for those who cannot serve in the military, he encouraged other forms of service, such as the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps.

"Those of us who have influence over the younger generation of Americans can encourage them to continue the tradition of American aviation and to follow the Tuskegee Airmen's example of service to our nation above self," he said. "For 70 years, the Tuskegee Airmen have rightfully been hailed as America's heroes. Through the actions we take starting today, we can ensure that their legacy lives -- then, now and in the future."

by Lisa Daniel, American Forces Press Service



TUSKEGEE AIRMEN WREATH LAYING CEREMONY

Maj. Gen. Darren W. McDew, Air Force District of Washington commander, attends the Tuskegee Airmen wreath laying ceremony Aug. 3 at the Air Force Memorial in Washington, D.C. The ceremony commemorated the history and service of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II combat operations. About 400 of the original Tuskegee Airmen remain. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Raymond Mills)

**AMBROSE DECILAP
WINS THE 2011 SCHOLARSHIP
AWARD OF \$1,500.**

Ambrose is shown here with his grandfather, Captain Claude A. Rowe. Ambrose's ambition is to earn a medical degree.

The number of family members pictured below represents a support group unparalleled.



Captain Rowe's whole family was present to see Ambrose honored with the Tuskegee Airmen, B.O. Davis, Jr., Scholarship. Attendees included. Dorothy Rowe, daughter; Winnie Rowe, the Captain's wife; Captain Claude A. Rowe; Harold Rowe, son; Ambrose Decilap, grandson; Deborah Rowe in back with Kristine Rowe, daughter in front; Ambre Decilap, granddaughter; Claude A. Rowe, III, son; and Ernie Rowe, grandson.

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, AVIATION EXCELLENCE CELEBRATED IN D.C

More than 650 people gathered for the 40th annual Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. convention Aug. 3-7, with events happening throughout the National Capitol Region.

This year's theme, "70 Years of Aviation Excellence: Then, Now, the Future," celebrates the 70th anniversary of the Tuskegee Airmen legacy.

Sixty-seven original Tuskegee Airmen registered for the convention; among them was retired Col. Charles E. McGee.

"Because we were segregated, we were together over a long time, so some life-long friendships have come out of that experience," McGee said.

"Gathering at conventions is our way of keeping in touch, even though our numbers are dropping off. Conventions are a chance for us to share with others in the different communities."

The week kicked off with the final flight of an Army 1944 PT-13 Stearman biplane Aug. 3, as it flew along the Potomac River. The aircraft was originally used to train Tuskegee pilots before retiring from military service as a crop duster.

Recognized as a vital piece of aviation and African-American history, the biplane -named the "Spirit of Tuskegee" - will be viewed by future generations at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African-American History and Culture.

This famous group of men also honored their brethren who lost their lives in service to their country with a special wreath-laying ceremony at the Air Force Memorial.

The original Airmen also received a sneak peak of the Martin Luther King Jr., National Memorial that is set to open to the public later this month on the National Mall.

Next on the agenda was a special day set aside for the younger attendees. Aug. 4 was set aside to hopefully inspire the aviators of tomorrow. Approximately 400 young adults between the ages of 13 and 19, from across the nation, began their day at Joint Base Andrews, Md. They toured static aircraft displays, watched operational demonstrations and tried on military gear.

Leaving the base, the teens traveled to the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center, Md., where they enjoyed a lunch with influential aviation and military leaders, including the Tuskegee Airmen.

"It's going great," said Trent Dudley, the president of TAI East Coast Chapter and event coordinator.

"Anytime you can link the original Airmen with the youth is wonderful."

"The way I put it when I talk to 7th graders or 8th graders is they need to realize that 25 years from now what's going on in the country is going to be what they're doing," McGee said. "So, we hope that they're still focused to preserve our freedoms and still seek equal opportunity and equal access for all."

An executive and senior leader panel fielded questions from an almost all military audience. The main topics discussed were possible changes to the military retirement system, diversity in the military, and mentoring.

"Diversity is a military necessity," said Dr. Jarris Taylor, Jr., the deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force for Strategic Diversity Integration. "Diversity is a leadership and managerial philosophy, not military equal opportunity. It's about organizational change."

"The more diverse that we are, the better," said retired Lt. Col. James C. Warren, an original Tuskegee Airman. "If we quit using hyphenations in America, we'll get along much better. I'm not an African-American; I'm an American citizen."

Warren has attended 39 of the 40 TAI conventions. He missed one because he was still on active duty serving in the Vietnam War.

Half-way through the day Aug. 5, a large crowd of hotel staff and guests lined the hallway outside the TAI ballroom. When the Tuskegee Airmen and current military service members broke for lunch, they were greeted with an explosion of clapping and cheering.

"It's such an honor for us to be able to host the Tuskegee Airmen. They are American icons," said Aimie Gorrell, the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center director of public relations. "We were thrilled that about 400 of our staff were able to take time away from their work today to come out and do what we call a 'standing ovation.' We do a standing ovation for our very most VIP guests and customers, and certainly the Tuskegee Airmen are our true VIPs today."

With all of the displays, discussions and deep heritage, the convention serves as a reminder of just how diverse American society has become in present day.

"It's been rewarding to be a part of the experience," McGee said, "and see that change has taken place. I believe it's for the good. Our country is more diverse now than it was then, so we need to stay on that road...because talent doesn't come with happenstance of birth," he said.

LT. COL. JAMES HARVEY RECEIVES NOEL F. PARRISH AWARD



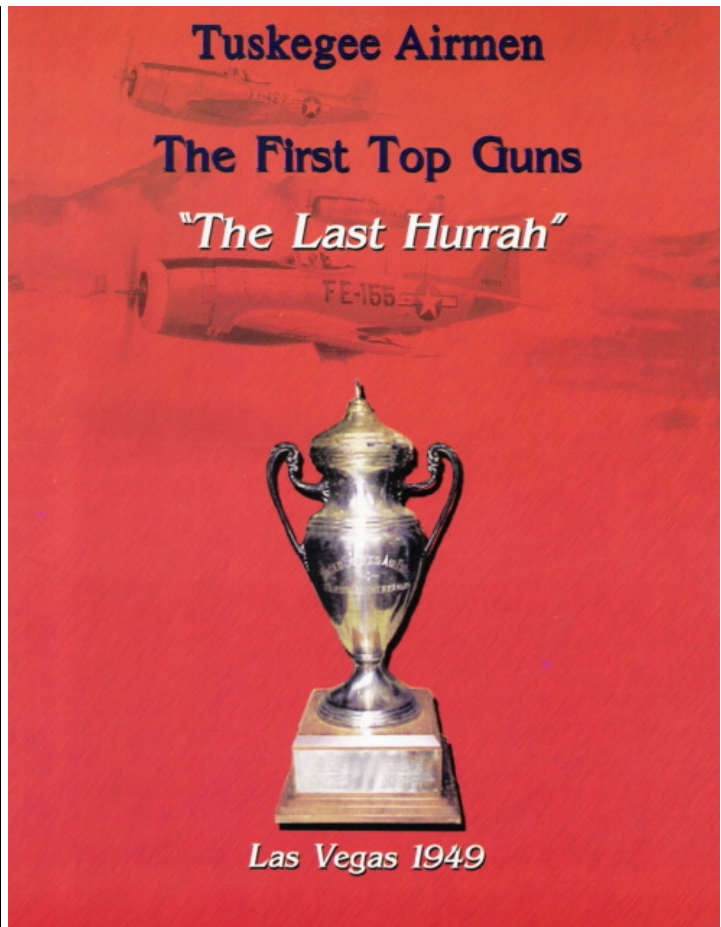
Pearlie Harvey congratulates her husband, Ret. Lt. Col. James Harvey, at the Gala Dinner for the Tuskegee Airmen 40th National Convention, August 6, 2011, at the Gaylord National Hotel, Md. Colonel Harvey received the Noel F. Parrish Award, the Tuskegee Airmen Inc., highest of honor. This award recognizes outstanding endeavors to enhance access to knowledge, skills, and opportunities. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Erik Cardenas) **(Ed Note: Col. Harvey was a member of the gunnery team that represented the 332nd Fighter Group , May 2-12, 1949, at Las Vegas, and won first place in the conventional fighter aircraft class.)**

THURMAN PIRTLE CHAPTER MEMBER—LOCATED

For months we have wondered about the health and whereabouts of Thurman Pirtle. My wife Hilda, and I were returning from a trip, and as we were collecting our luggage from the carousel, who do you think we spotted collecting his luggage? Yes, it was Pirtle and he says he feels good. Ed.

ATTEND THE NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE BENJAMIN O. DAVIS, JR., TUSKEGEE AIRMEN CHAPTER, WILL BE HELD AT 6:30 PM ON 17 NOVEMBER 2011 AT THE *COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT*, 8651 SPECTRUM CENTER BLVD, KEARNY MESA, CA.



This trophy was won by Capt. Alva Temple, Lt James Harvey, Harry Stewart, and Halbert Alexander representing the 332nd Fighter Group flying P-47s. This was the first USAF Gunnery Meet held in Las Vegas, May 2-12, 1949.

Coincidentally, less that a month later, June 1, 1949, Lockbourne was deactivated and all Tuskegee Airmen were scattered to bases throughout the world.

The Annual Tuskegee Airmen Celebration, presented by the University of California, Riverside Libraries and the Tuskegee Archive, will be held on November 5, 2011. Zellie Rainey Orr will give a presentation on the Top Gun Competition held in 1949 won by the Tuskegee Airmen. The three surviving members of the team will be honored. Please plan to attend. Call (951)827-3221 for more info.

RED TAILS—THE MOVIE

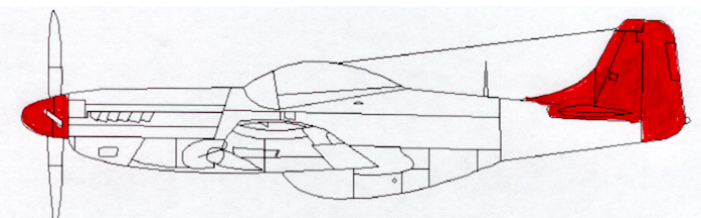
Paulette Mello sends information on the long anticipated movie about the Tuskegee Airmen. Paulette was online and decided to check the status of the upcoming *Red Tails* movie. It is slated to be released January 2012 (finally). Here is a link to view the movie trailer:

<http://www.imdb.com/video/imdb/vi624270361/>

The story of the Tuskegee Airmen, the first African-American pilots to fly in a combat squadron during World War II.

(Ed. Iscarozzi reviewed the movie and his remarks have been abbreviated.)

OK folks, I can appreciate the criticisms, and you historical advocates are correct that there are a lot of inaccuracies in this depiction of the Tuskegee Airmen, but as a screenwriter and someone who knows a few things (not all things) about the movie business, this movie isn't trying to be anything that it says it isn't. "Inspired By True Events" gives a LOT of lateral leeway in telling the story, especially surrounding some of the details. The bottom line is that Hollywood is about entertainment and making stories that people will pay money to see, and feel great about seeing at the end. "Red Tails" is going to hit the "marks" of the underdog African American pilots of the 332nd Fighter Wing (true) over coming adversity and racism (true) to be assigned to highly risky bomber escort missions over Europe (true) and kicking total ass doing it (also true). Sounds like a great MOVIE to me! I am willing to bet money that a large part of using "inaccurate" colors and insignias on the planes was more geared for the audience to be able to distinguish who was who in the fighter sequences than to flagrantly snub historical facts. That's my 2 cents worth, I can't wait to see the movie, and I hope the rest of it is a great story. Thank you.



P-51C And Traveling Exhibit Honor Tuskegee Airmen

The Cleveland National Air Show will feature many amazing American aircraft ranging from the modern era back to WWII war birds. But a rare P-51C Mustang will stand out from the others for two reasons: it has a bright red tail and it is a key part of an educational initiative to help people, particularly young people, understand and appreciate the history and legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen.



It will be joined by the new CAF Red Tail Squadron RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit, a customized 53' trailer with expandable sides that houses a 160-degree curved movie screen and seating for 30 in climate-controlled comfort. A 14-minute original movie called "RISE ABOVE" focuses on what the Tuskegee Airmen, pilots and their support personnel, had to overcome to be allowed to fly and fight for their country during World War II. The movie was created by Emmy-winning Cleveland filmmaker Adam White, owner of Hemlock Films. Part of the movie was shot in Cleveland using local actors and crew personnel.

The CAF Red Tail Squadron, a volunteer-driven non-profit organization that is part of the Commemorative Air Force, completed a \$1 million restoration of the Mustang, named "Tuskegee Airmen," in 2009, and the airplane has been on the air show circuit ever since.

The RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit and the red-tailed P-51C Mustang, Tuskegee Airmen, will be on display between 0900 and 1700 at the Cleveland National Air Show, September 3-5, at Burke Lakefront Airport in Cleveland, Ohio. The Mustang also flies (weather permitting) as scheduled during the core hours.

(Fri, Aug 26, 2011 clevelandairshow.com)

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN GET ADVANCE LOOK AT THE DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL



Tuskegee Airmen William Fauntroy, left, and William Wilson, got an early look at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Wednesday. The veterans are in Washington for the Tuskegee national convention; the memorial will open in late August.

(Jacquelyn Martin | AP)

Section of I-95 dedicated to Tuskegee Airmen

WALTERBORO, S.C. — A stretch of Interstate 95 in South Carolina is being dedicated in honor of the Tuskegee Airmen, the nation's first black Army airmen.

Tuskegee Memorial Highway signs are being unveiled Sunday at the Colleton County Courthouse.

The airmen who became pilots during World War II received their flight training at the Tuskegee Army Air Field in Tuskegee, Ala.

They also received their combat training at several army air bases along the East Coast, including what was then the Walterboro Army Airfield. That field is now the Lowcountry Regional Airport in Walterboro.

(AP Sunday Jul 24, 2011)

Don't you think we have enough highways and freeways in California with at least one warranted being named:

Tuskegee Airmen Highway

Let's get a letter writing campaign started to our state Senators and Representatives.

MARINE CORPS LAW ENFORCEMENT FOUNDATION

By Christine Epstein

The Marine Corps Law Enforcement Foundation began in 1995 among a group of Marines and law enforcement personnel who wanted to take care of the children of fallen federal officers and military personnel. Since its inception, they have presented some \$50 million dollars to surviving children. It is a \$30,000 bond to assist in post high school education. In addition, this group has given bonds to the surviving children of those lost at the Pentagon on 9/11; the USS Cole; Khobar Towers and the Columbia shuttle. If a child has special needs, financial assistance may be given which is not covered by insurance. They have also provided support to some 30 surviving children of British and Polish service personnel who were killed in the line of duty. They also provide free plastic surgery or dental reconstruction. So far in 2011, they have dispensed some \$1.1 million dollars to surviving children.

I learned about this when attending the MCLEF dinner at the Admiral Kidd Club in June 2011. Jeff Moorad, Vice President and CEO, Padres Baseball team, is an honorary chairman. Major General Melvin Spiese, Deputy Commanding General, Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton was the guest speaker. Regional Vice President Eric Torykian advised that the country is divided into regions. All the money raised by regional dinners or activities is used in the region. There are no administrative fees and all the money is 100% deductible.

It was a very enjoyable evening for a very worthwhile organization. If you are interested in learning more, their website is www.mclef.org.



Legislative Update: Federal

Ron E Lacey

As you may know legislative action is constantly occurring at the Federal level and at the State level. It would behoove all veterans and their spouses to be aware and active in letting your elected officials know your sentiments on legislation that affects your current or pending situation. For that reason, I have decided to keep a tab on some of the legislative action taking place at the federal and state level. If you would like to find out more, or just as a way of keeping abreast of legislation at the federal level: U.S House and U.S Senate bills, go to: <http://Thomas.loc.gov> and you can get the details for any and all legislation that is being discussed, acted on or passed. To obtain information on California State Bills, go to: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html>. Currently at the Federal Level, **HR-303** to End Military Retirement/VA Disability Offset. Concurrent receipt. **“Retired Pay Restoration Act”** that would end offset for longevity retirees with service-connected VA disabilities of 10%-40%. HR-303, introduced by Rep Gus Bilirakis (R, FL) on 1/18/11, now has 66 co-sponsors – two from San Diego County including Rep Bob Filner, the Ranking Member of the HVAC, and Rep Duncan D. Hunter who serves on the HASC. HASC has this bill for action now, in the HASC’s Subcommittee on Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs.

SUMMARY AS OF:

1/18/2011--Introduced.

Retired Pay Restoration Act - Expresses the sense of Congress that military retired pay should not be reduced because a military retiree is also eligible for veterans' disability compensation awarded for a service-connected disability. Allows the receipt of both military retired pay and veterans' disability compensation with respect to any service-connected disability (under current law, only a disability rated at 50% or more). Repeals provisions phasing in the full concurrent receipt of such pay through December 31, 2013.

Makes eligible for the full concurrent receipt of both veterans' disability compensation and either military retired pay or combat-related special pay those individuals who were retired or separated from military service due to a service-connected disability.

HR-178, Military Survivors Spouses Equity Act. Would end the un-remarried surviving spouse’s SBP/DIC offset. Authored by Rep Joe Wilson, and now has 147 CO-sponsors. Rep Duncan Hunter, Rep Susan Davis, Rep Brian Bilbray and Rep Bob Filner are co-sponsors from San Diego County’s delegation. HASC’s Subcommittee on Military Personnel has HR-178 for action now. Similar Bills have passed Congress for 10 years, but were unfunded by Appropriations committees. Companion bill in the U.S Senate is S.260, which has 46 co-sponsors, including Sen Barbara Boxer.

SUMMARY AS OF:

1/5/2011--Introduced.

Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act - Repeals certain provisions which require the offset of amounts paid in dependency and indemnity compensation from Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities for the surviving spouses of former military personnel who are entitled to military retired pay or who would be entitled to retired pay except for being under 60 years of age. Prohibits requiring repayment of certain amounts previously paid to SBP recipients in the form of a retired pay refund.

Repeals the optional authority of (and instead requires) the Secretary of the military department concerned to pay an annuity to a member’s dependent children when there is no eligible surviving spouse.

Directs the Secretary concerned to restore annuity eligibility to a surviving spouse who earlier agreed to transfer such eligibility to a surviving child or children of a member.

Another interesting story that recently came to light is the publishing of ships that transported military personnel during the Vietnam War and how that information can be used in cases where veterans are dealing with compensation for exposure to **“Agent Orange”**.

Legislative Update: State

Ron E Lacey

At the California State Level, plenty of bills affecting veterans and military personnel, primarily active duty and retired is being discussed. For the purpose of this News Letter, in both the case of the Federal and State Levels, I will try to focus on legislation that is relevant to our organization and to your family as well. In the event you want more information or are interested in other topics, I have included the links to get you access to all legislation being discussed at both the Federal and State Level.

AB-201: would authorize Superior Courts to develop veterans' courts as we've done in San Diego. ASM Mary Salas from Chula Vista previously had her AB-1925 approved last year, but was vetoed by the previous Governor who said Superior Courts already have the authorization to establish a veterans' court. AB-201 passed the full Assembly on 5/5/11 with a 74-0 vote on 6/28/11. **Governor Brown vetoed AB-201 on 8/5/11.**

AB-342: ASM Toni Atkins' bill would establish a permanent liaison office in the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to coordinate efforts with DoD in CA. Passed Assembly in 70-0 vote 5/12/11. Passed the Senate's Appropriations Committee on 8/5/11. But on 9/1/11 Senator Liu moved this bill on the **"inactive file."**

AB-1088: A bill sponsored by Assemblyman Nathan Fletcher last year established the "California Veterans Home Fund." To date, during Jan-Aug 2011, 18,141 California taxpayers donated \$199,536 from their state income tax refunds to this new Fund to help the residents at our six California Veterans Homes.

I hope this information provides some insight into what is being done to assist veterans and their families. As I stated earlier, there is plenty of legislation pending and enacted that has an impact on all veterans in some form or fashion. It would behoove all of us to educate ourselves on the issues and to advocate when appropriate either as private citizens or as a board representing the San Diego Chapter of the, Benjamin O Davis Tuskegee Airmen.

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, WWII PLANE VISITING AF ACADEMY

AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. — Seven members of the Tuskegee Airmen are visiting the Air Force Academy at the same time a World War II trainer airplane stops there on a trip to one of the Smithsonian museums.

The seven airmen will be at the academy on Tuesday. They were members of the pioneering all-black 99th Fighter Squadron in World War II.

The Boeing-Stearman PT-13D trainer was decommissioned in 1946 and used as a crop duster for several decades.

In 2005, an Air Force captain bought the plane and restored it to flying condition. It's now called "The Spirit of Tuskegee" and has appeared at air shows and used to publicize the Tuskegee Airmen's legacy.

The plane will be among the inaugural exhibitions at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

The Associated Press
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Boeing Stearman PT-13D

ACTOR, EXHIBIT HONOR TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

The Tuskegee Airmen—black airmen who trained as pilots in Tuskegee, Ala., during World War II as an “experiment” because the military didn’t believe they could learn to fly and fight—proved themselves in combat as the U.S. military’s first black pilots. Shortly after the war, they were largely responsible for desegregation of the Air Force, the first branch of the military to desegregate. Their contributions were recalled at AOPA Aviation Summit on Sept. 22 by Oscar-winning actor Cuba Gooding Jr., one of the stars of *Red Tails*, a new film by George Lucas set for release in January that tells how the Tuskegee Airmen continued to overcome adversity to prove themselves heroically in combat. And a new traveling exhibit operated by the Commemorative Air Force’s Red Tail Squadron, Rise Above, is on display at Airportfest at Hartford-Brainard Airport through Sept. 24

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The veteran actor has not yet seen the film, which is still in post-production. “From the materials I’ve seen, I’m very proud of the accomplishments...the emotional impact that I’ve seen it have on me. [The film] really conveys the tribulations they went through in combat.”

Gooding shared a little inside information, as well: Look for the release of *Double Victory* ahead of the movie. “Lucas put together a two-hour documentary on the history of the Tuskegee Airmen.”

Several of the original Tuskegee Airmen were on the set every day in Prague, in the Czech Republic, where Gooding filmed for 13 weeks. “They would sit and talk about stories and it would remind them of something...they would tell us more. They were checking our uniforms and moving our belts. If there was anything too heightened in reality they would pipe up,” he said. “There’s a connection,” Gooding said, explaining that he’s called to stories themed around the African-American experience. “Those stories to

me are very attractive—they’re very telling.”

At Airportfest, look behind the immaculately restored Mustang to see the Rise Above portable theater. Inside, a 13-minute panoramic multimedia presentation with surround sound tells the story of the Tuskegee Airmen. (A longer, 35-minute program tells a more detailed story to student groups.)

The airplane was restored in 2001 and flown to honor the Tuskegee Airmen, explained Doug Rozendaal, one of the Mustang’s pilots. It was damaged during a landing accident after the engine failed in 2004, and pilot Don Hinz was killed. At the time, the squadron had no money and wasn’t sure what to do. “We used the Tuskegee Airmen as an example of what to do,” he said. “We pulled it together and then we just kept going. Don’s vision was to use [the airplane] for education.” That led to the portable theater and a traveling exhibit. The Texas Flying Legends, a museum at Ellington Field in Houston, saw what the squadron was trying to do and was so impressed by the Tuskegee Airmen that they provided the funding for the Rise Above exhibition.

The trailer is an immersive experience, Rozendaal said. “You’ve got to create an experience in order to change behavior,” he said, paraphrasing FAA flight instructor training materials. “Our sense is that we’ve created an experience.” Some of the multimedia content is from *Red Tail Reborn*, a documentary that features the Mustang’s second restoration, following the crash.

The Rise Above exhibit debuted at EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh in July and has only been on the road for 45 days, Rozendaal said. The squadron plans to display the exhibit two or three times each week, often taking it off-airport. “We’re planning a 40-week tour for next year, over nine months,” he explained. “We’ll take it to wherever the kids are.”

While they seek to take the story to young people—and ideally bring kids out to the airport—the primary goal is to tell the story of the Tuskegee Airmen. “At the end of the day, it’s about the kids drawing a target on the wall for what they want to be when they grow up,” Rozendaal said. “We all have overcome adversity. And these guys showed the world it could be done.”

For more information on the Red Tail Squadron’s Rise Above exhibit, for schedule information when it becomes available, or to support the tour, [see the website](#).

Visit www.redtail.org

Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. sm



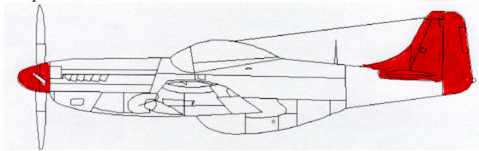
99th Fighter Sq



332nd Fighter Group



100th Fighter Sq



P-51D



301st Fighter Squadron



302nd Fighter Squadron

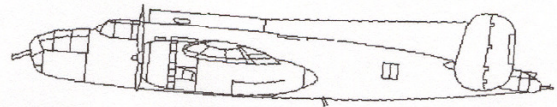


616th Bombardment Squadron

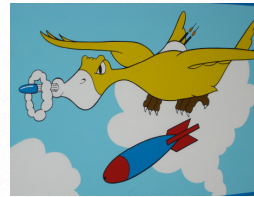
477th Bombardment Group



617th Bombardment Squadron



B-25A



618th Bombardment Squadron



619th Bombardment Squadron

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