



CAF RISE ABOVE®

Inspiring young people to RISE ABOVE adversity using the lessons and stories of the Tuskegee Airmen and the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP).

August 2023



EAA AirVenture is always a highlight of the Summer, and 2023 was no exception. We have been honored to participate in EAA AirVenture, the “World’s Greatest Aviation Celebration,” in Oshkosh, WI for many years. It is a weeklong event filled with countless aircraft and aviation enthusiasts from around the globe. It gives us the chance to meet up with old friends and make new ones, and broadcast our inspirational message about the Tuskegee Airmen and WASP to huge audiences.

This year we were again able to position the RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit at KidVenture, a spectacular location to attract kids and families. We are proud to report that our team welcomed nearly 1,000 visitors. We handed out our dog tags featuring the Six Guiding Principles, RISE ABOVE booklets and the Flight Plan for Life activity sheets to over 500 children.

Also, we were honored to have original Tuskegee Airman with us to greet our visitors, answer their questions and sign autographs. Their presence was so special, and it was very generous of them to share their time to help us encourage young people to RISE ABOVE their own obstacles and achieve success.

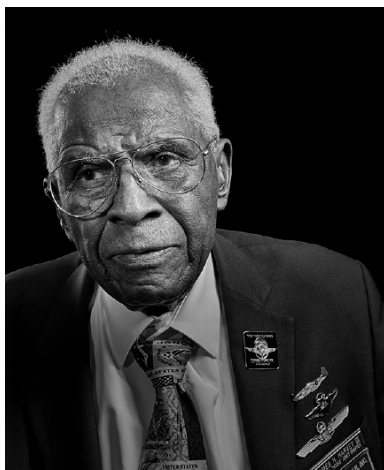
As staff and volunteers of the CAF Rise Above Squadron, we travel the country all year meeting fantastic young people looking for the opportunity to dream, realize and achieve their individual or collective goals. But there is another group of people we meet as well - mentors. When we experience a great month like we did in July, we realize there are a GREAT many of us willing to give, nurture and grow our youth by providing leadership and the high expectation for the next generation to aspire to. But it takes many hands to make light work! Our admiration goes to you all who support our cause, with your donations and volunteer hours. Because of our continued collective work, our individual efforts are amplified to a more abundant harvest, and we have a great impact across this great country.

The CAF Rise Above Team

Thank you to renowned photographer John Slemph who captured these stunning photographs of the Tuskegee Airmen at Oshkosh! [You can see more of his work here.](#) Photos courtesy ©2023 John Slemph



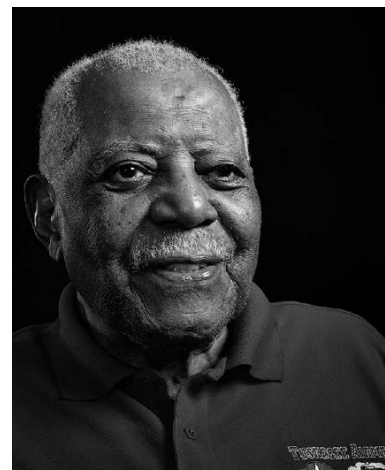
Lt Col George Hardy



Lt Col James Harvey III



Lt Col Harry Stewart



Dr. Eugene Richardson

Thank you to our Ambassadors for being our “Boots on the Ground”



Melanie Burden



Ken Mist



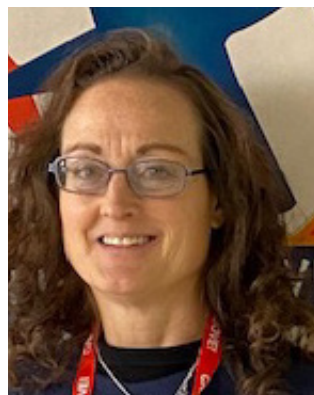
Ron McGee



Yvonne McGee



Mark Erickson



The Carothers Family: Alex, Carri, and Gabriel



Jeannette Rooke



Mike Fialkowski



Hubert Looney



Brian Hamilton



Pat Sutterfield



John Beyl



Steve Kaminsen

“As the children were coming out, you could hear their excitement – ‘When I grow up, I want to be a nurse or a pilot.’”

~Wendy Hartzell, chief academic officer

Be A Hometown Hero – Bring The RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit To Your Community!

The CAF RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit could be available to make a stop in your hometown. Imagine the draw an exhibit like this would be at your airshow, community event or festival!

Contact Keri Ryan, CAF RISE ABOVE Squadron Logistics Coordinator, at (802) 371-8838 or logistics@cafriseabove.org for more information.



A picture worth a thousand words! Photo courtesy Megan Vande Voort



This young fella was so interested to hear what Lt Col James Harvey III had to say.



Crowds lined up to meet the Airmen



Always the charmer, Lt Col George Hardy enjoys VIP treatment from the Ladies of Liberty



Thanks to one of our donors, Gary Bleichner, from Fairbault, MN who sent a bag of Tuskegee Airmen quarters for the Airmen to give to children. I am not sure who enjoyed it more - the Airmen or the children receiving the coin!



Author Erin Miller made a new friend who is VERY interested to learn more about the WASP

It was good to have John Beyl and Steve Kaminsen answer questions guests had about the P-51C Mustang





FEATURED TUSKEGEE AIRMEN PROFILE

America's Tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen

Edward L. Toppins

June 12, 1915 – December 10, 1946

Class: 42-H-SE

Graduation date: 9/6/1942

Rank at time of graduation: 2nd Lt.

Unit: 332nd Fighter Group's 99th Fighter Squadron

Service # 0792425

From: San Francisco CA

Edward registered for military service on October 16, 1940, and applied for the Tuskegee Army Air Field Training Program.

He was accepted into the program, but suffered multiple injuries during a training accident crash. While it took several months for him to recover, Edward was not deterred of his dream to fly and serve his nation. He graduated the program with Class 42-H, earning his wings as a 2nd Lieutenant on September 6, 1942. After graduation, 2nd Lt. Toppins married his wife, Lucille.

What followed graduation was one of the most heroic and storied military service experiences of the second World War. As a 2nd Lt, then 1st Lt., then Captain assigned to the 99th Pursuit Squadron, Edward L. Toppins flew an amazing 141 missions and scored four confirmed aerial victories, one shy of the status of Ace. Captain Toppins, [Captain Joseph D. Elsberry](#) of the 301st Fighter Squadron, and [1st Lt. Lee A. Archer](#) of the 302nd Fighter Squadron, were the three Tuskegee Airmen with such a distinction. During one mission near Lake Balaton, Captain Toppins recalled a "sky covered with clouds of varying layers. This was excellent cover for attacking enemy aircraft. We were flying P-51s." The American pilots noticed three ME-109s nearby and started a chase that lasted nearly 30 minutes. Two of the ME-109s were confirmed destroyed, one presumed destroyed.

Upon his return from the European theater, Captain Toppins continued his service as the Commanding Officer of the 602nd Air Engineering Squadron at the Lockbourne Army Air Base of Ohio. On December 10, 1946, he was piloting a B-52 bomber on a routine instrument training exercise. With him were co-pilot Captain Chase Brenzier, Jr., Lt. Ralph Berkes, and S/Sgt. John Smith. During the flight, there was an undetermined problem that caused the bomber to crash near the Air Base, exploding over a 25-acre swath of land. All four aboard were killed.

[**Read his profile online!**](#)



Learn more about the [CAF Red Tail Squadron](#), whose mission is sharing the inspiring legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen, America's first black military pilots and their support personnel. Their strength, courage, and ability to triumph over adversity during WWII can serve to inspire others about how to succeed today.

**"I never thought about air-to-air combat as a big problem. I looked for it."
~Tuskegee Airman 1st Lt. Lee "Buddy" Archer, Jr., 302nd Fighter Squadron**



LTC Jack Daniels Holsclaw

Photos courtesy Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell, AFB, Alabama

The Tuskegee Airmen flew hundreds of patrol and attack missions for the Twelfth Air Force, flying P-40 and P-39 airplanes, before they were reassigned to the 15th Air Force to escort B-17 and B-24 heavy bombers, using P-47 and P-51 airplanes. The famous "Tuskegee Airmen" of the 332nd Fighter Group became part of the 15th Air Force, escorting American bombers as they flew over Italy. As escorts, flying P-47s and later P-51s, they were responsible for protecting larger bombers from German fighter planes. The Tuskegee Airmen flew more than 15,000 sorties between May 1943 and June 1945. Bomber crews often requested to be escorted by these "Red Tails," a nickname acquired from the painted tails of Tuskegee fighter planes, which were a distinctive deep red. Sixty-six Tuskegee Airmen died in combat. They had one of the lowest loss records of any escort fighter group.



Honoring the Women Airforce Service Pilots

FEATURED WASP PROFILE

Helen Cannon

Class 44-W-9

May 16, 1916 - Dec. 25, 2009

Planes flown: PT-17, BT-13, AT-6, B-24, B-26

Training Location: Avenger Field (Sweetwater, Tex.)

Assigned bases: Luke Field (Goodyear, Ariz.)

Helen was born May 16, 1916, in Cameron, Wis., to Helena Reich Case and Walter Case. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Helen taught school and financially helped her sisters complete their education and saved the rest for flying lessons. To get more flying time, she went to work at an airport in Huron, S.D., as the chief mechanic's right-hand dope applier. In 1944, she joined the Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASP).

Helen was stationed at Luke Field, Ariz., where she met her husband, Robert O. "Bob" Cannon Jr. She was a test pilot for the AT-6s and ferried PT 17s. After the WASP disbanded, she taught flying at Stephens College in Columbia, Mo. She and Bob were married in Los Angeles in 1946 and moved to Las Vegas where Bob resumed his career in the hotel industry. A resident of Las Vegas for 63 years, Helen became involved in community and volunteer work. She was past president of Junior League, an active member of United Fund, Family Counseling Agency, past council safety chairman for the P.T.A., and a former member of Valley Hospital Board of Governors. In 1961, she flew in the Powder Puff Derby, a coast-to-coast women's air race. She served 20 years on the Clark County School Board, holding positions of clerk, vice president and president. In 1976 the Helen C. Cannon Middle School (Las Vegas) dedicated in her honor. She said, "The only reason the School Board exists is to serve the children." She was past president of the Nevada State School Board Association, inducted into the Nevada Interscholastic Athletic Activities Hall of Fame, past member of the Nevada Educational Communications Commission, an honorary member of Delta Kappa Gamma, and an adult literacy tutor. Helen taught swimming lessons for the Red Cross, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. In 1976, the Helen C. Cannon Middle School was dedicated in her honor.



[Read her profile online!](#)

Learn more about the [RISE ABOVE: WASP](#), whose mission is sharing the story of the Women Airforce Service Pilots in order to inspire others, especially girls and young women, to RISE ABOVE expectations and find a greater appreciation of their potential.

“We were an experiment. We were a guinea pig class, as they called us, because they didn’t think women could learn to fly military planes.”

WASP Betty C. Tackaberry Blake
Class: 43-W-1



A trio of Women Airforce Service Pilots look over flight plans around the cockpit of a Curtiss A-25A at Camp Davis Army Air Field, North Carolina, circa 1944. General Arnold released a report that revealed 20 percent of the women actively flying in 1944 had children under fourteen, and some 15 percent of trainees had children.



Please help us ensure that the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and WASP is passed on to future generations, so that their strength of character, courage and ability to triumph over adversity may serve as a means to inspire others to RISE ABOVE obstacles in their own lives and achieve their goals!

WAYS TO GIVE

- Does your employer have a matching gift program? Your donation to the CAF Rise Above may be able to be doubled or tripled. Ask your employer for details.
- Include the CAF Rise Above as a beneficiary in your will
- Name the CAF Rise Above as a beneficiary of a gift that pays you income (a remainder trust or gift annuity)
- Name the CAF Rise Above as the beneficiary of your investment portfolio or retirement account (IRA, Roth IRA, 401K, etc.)
- Leave a gift of real estate to the CAF Rise Above
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[Give online](#), or call 888-928-0188, or by mail at:

CAF RISE ABOVE
PO Box 416
Red Wing, MN 55066

The CAF RISE ABOVE® is an educational outreach program of the [Commemorative Air Force](#), (CAF) a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax deductible less the value of the benefits given in return for your contribution noted above, if any. CAF FEIN # 74-1484491

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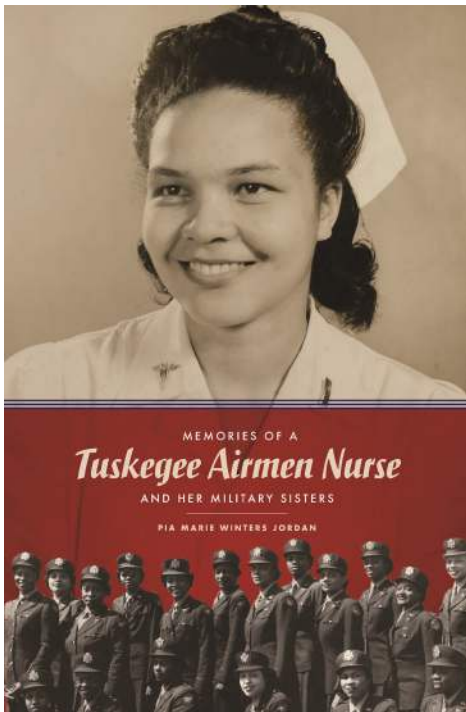
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Why 99? *(for each annual membership)*

Join RISE ABOVE: RED TAIL

The 99th was originally formed as the U.S. Army Air Forces' first African American fighter squadron, then known as the 99th Pursuit Squadron. The personnel received their initial flight training at Tuskegee, Alabama earning them the nickname Tuskegee Airmen.



Join RISE ABOVE: WASP

The Ninety-Nines was founded November 2, 1929, at Curtiss Field, Valley Stream, Long Island, New York. All 117 women pilots at the time were invited to assemble in mutual support of the advancement of women in aviation. In 1942 members of the Ninety-Nines were asked to join the Women



Every student who visits the Rise Above Traveling Exhibit receives a free dog tag featuring the Six Guiding Principles: **AIM HIGH, BELIEVE IN YOURSELF, USE YOUR BRAIN, BE READY TO GO, NEVER QUIT, and EXPECT TO WIN.**



Please mail correspondence or donations to our home office at:

CAF RISE ABOVE®
PO Box 416
Red Wing, MN 55066



To bring RISE ABOVE to your event, contact:

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[CAF RISE ABOVE: Red Tail](#) - Share the inspiring legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen, America's first black military pilots and their support personnel. Their strength, courage, and ability to triumph over adversity during WWII can serve to inspire others about how to succeed today.

[CAF RISE ABOVE: WASP](#) - Share the story of the Women Airforce Service Pilots in order to inspire others, especially girls and young women, to RISE ABOVE expectations and find a greater appreciation of their potential.

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RISE ABOVE: Red Tail - Keep an eye on our blog and don't miss out on a single story

Find an archive of all our best articles, featuring closer looks at original Tuskegee Airmen, the P-51C Mustang *Tuskegee Airmen*, and many more in-depth stories in our blog. [Check it out!](#)



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Join the conversation [@cafredtail on Twitter!](#) There's a lot going on here and you don't want to miss it. Want to help educate others about the history and legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen? Retweet to spread the word!

