



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).

July 2024



Squadron members' affection for our aircraft, the P-51C Tuskegee Airmen 'By Request,' is well-attested by our commitment to support and share her story - and the larger historical context her red tail livery represents. The actual model aircraft is historically significant, however: the machine has history, alongside the message. A (very) brief primer, then, on the importance - and relative rarity - of our 'Razorback' or 'Birdcage' model Mustang:

- Setting aside testbed aircraft, there were three production P-51 model 'Pursuit' (fighter / escort) planes with unblown (non-bubble) canopies (which entered service with the P-51D): the P-51A, P-51B and P-51C. Recognizing these numbers are *extremely* fluid, and tend to vary wildly depending on the source, as of this writing there are some 300 surviving P-51 airframes of all variants, approximately half that number in (or working toward) flying condition. Of the Mustangs still flying, over 100 - well over two-thirds - are P-51D (or later) bubble-canopy Mustangs. Those are rare and precious birds, every one of them...but consider how many fewer

Razorback Mustangs that leaves airworthy: there are fewer than a half-dozen each of the P-51A, P-51B and P-51C still flying... and that includes Reno Air Race versions which no longer reflect their warbird / historic heritage. Our Red Tail is a kind of magic - among the rarest sorts of history made manifest.

- There were a number of significant structural differences between the later familiar bubble-canopy P-51Ds and the earlier Razorback Mustangs - but for our focus, the very visual distinctiveness of that cockpit change is sufficient. How were the three

-P-51A: Fitted with the original Allison V-1710 inline engine, which was reportedly more effective at lower altitude than the powerplant is generally given credit for, but suffered greatly in performance at altitude...so much so as to endanger the design's future. Also usually distinguished by a three-blade Curtis propeller and nose-mounted machine guns. There were also photo-recon (F-6B) and *dive-bomber* versions (A-36, sometimes called the Apache or the Invader but mostly still just called a Mustang); almost all served in the China/Burma/India theater of operations.



Curtis Fowles cub373@mustangsmustangs.com

P-51A Mustang

-P-51B: distinct from our P-51C primarily by production factory (Inglewood, CA) and (per some sources) a greater reliance on imported Rolls-Royce Merlin 61 inline engines, the other commonly-cited - because it is readily visual - difference between B and C Razorbacks, the 'Malcolm Hood,' a canopy improvement which increased both visibility and access (by sliding back, rather than hinging) was in fact an 'as possible' modification to any of the early Mustangs with birdcage canopies (though sources continue to call it out as a P-51B spotting characteristic).



P-51B Mustang

-P-51C: 'Our' Mustangs were all built at North American Aviation in Dallas, TX. Most featured the Packard V-1650 version of the Merlin, built in Warren, OH. Like the Bs, they featured four-blade Hamilton Standard propellers, and 4 .50-caliber machine guns in the wings. Horsepower jumped from 1200 to 1490, but effective horsepower at altitude was almost 500 hp greater than available from the original Allison. Moreover, with wing, fuselage and drop tanks, range increased to up to 2000 miles. With the P-51C, the true long-range escort fighter had arrived - just in time to begin carrying the war back to the aggressor, in the hands of such capable, dedicated pilots as the Tuskegee Airmen.



P-51C Mustang
Tuskegee Airmen

Our CAF Rise Above message is about very much more than just our machine - but that does not diminish the historical importance OF the machine. We are fortunate to have her to continue to share. I hope every one of you who support this mission get to see the look in the eye of a young person who begins to understand these things, when he or she reaches out and actually touches her....

Respectfully,
Chris Allen
CAF Rise Above Road Exhibit Director

[Learn about the history of the P-51C Tuskegee Airmen 'By Request'](#)

75th Anniversary celebration of the Gunnery Competition!



Despite what the movie “Top Gun” will tell you, the U.S. military’s first real-world “Top Gun” program wasn’t set up by the Navy. It was an Air Force program that first took place in 1949. Tuskegee Airmen [Capt. Alva Temple](#), [1st Lt. Harry Stewart](#), [1st Lt. James H. Harvey III](#) and alternate [Halbert Alexander](#), competing in P-47N Thunderbolts, would win it.

In January 1949, the chief of staff of the Air Force put a call out to all USAF fighter groups to send their three top scorers to represent their group at the first Top Gun “weapons meet.”

The airmen went to Las Vegas Air Force Base, now called Nellis Air Force Base, and pilots competed in five events -- aerial gunnery, dive bombing, skip bombing, rocket firing and panel strafing.

Despite flying obsolete aircraft, they led the 10-day event almost every step of the way. Their competitors were flying the P-51 Mustang and the P-82 Twin Mustang fighters.

The competition is now called “William Tell,” and the winner of the annual event has their name added to the list of past winners in the Air Force Association’s yearly almanac. For 46 years, the winner of the 1949 competition was listed as “unknown.” It wasn’t until 1995 that it finally listed the winner as the 332nd Fighter Group.

“When it was announced that we, the 332nd, had won the trophy, the room was quiet,” Col Harvey recalled. “There was no applause or anything like that. Because we weren’t supposed to win it. Little did I know, this was the last time the public would see the trophy for 55 years.”

The trophy sat in storage at the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, for much of that time.

Historian Zellie Rainey Orr discovered the trophy and the story of the 332nd’s epic “Top Gun” victory. In 2004, the trophy was finally put on display in the Air Force museum.

[Watch “The Untold Story of the First Top Gun Competition”](#)

EVENT PHOTOS - COLUMBUS AIR SHOW, MISSOURI



Ohio Air National Guard KC-135 Group Commander John 'Panda' Tudela brought daughter Alessandra and son Antonio to the Columbus Air Show to see the CAF Rise Above documentaries about the Tuskegee Airmen and - of particular inspiration to Alessandra, an aspiring future aviator herself - the WASP!



Gary Garrett of Sebring, Florida and Duane Sims of Rochester, New York joined the CAF Rise above road crew in Columbus, Ohio as Ambassadors for the 2024 Columbus Air Show!



SSgt Tiffany Moser, USAF Thunderbird 5 Dedicated Crew Chief.



Chris, Adrienne and Linda returned to the Columbus Air Show in 2024 specifically to see the CAF Rise Above Tuskegee Airmen and WASP documentaries - and meet pilot Doug Rozendaal and the P-51C *Tuskegee Airmen* 'By Request' after a beautiful afternoon of aerobatics!



The Ohio State University Buckeye Pep Band - the summer contingent of The Best Damned Band In The Land - joined the CAF Rise Above traveling exhibit and P-51C Mustang *Tuskegee Airmen* 'By Request' at the Columbus Air Show in June!



Herb Gillen, producer of the excellent Columbus Air Show, accepted a sign commemorative print of Tuskegee Airmen by Request - and extended an official invitation for CAF Rise Above to return, in August 2025!



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 the CAF Rise Above Squadron at (888) 928-0188 or email logistics@cafriseabove.org for more information.

AIM HIGH
BELIEVE IN YOURSELF
USE YOUR BRAIN
NEVER QUIT
BE READY TO GO
EXPECT TO WIN





FEATURED TUSKEGEE AIRMEN PROFILE

America's Tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen

Coleman Alexander Young
May 24, 1918 - November 29, 1997
Unit: 477th Medium-Bomber Group

Coleman A. Young was a politician, civil rights activist, Tuskegee Airman, and labor leader. He was the first African American to be elected mayor of Detroit. He also became the city's longest-serving mayor.

Young was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, to William Coleman Young, a dry cleaner, and Ida Reese Jones. His family moved in 1923 to Detroit, as part of the Great Migration out of the South to industrial cities that offered more opportunity. There Young graduated from Eastern High School in 1935. He became a member of the United Auto Workers, and worked for Ford Motor Company. Later Young worked for the United States Post Office Department. During World War II, Young served in the 477th Medium-Bomber Group (the renowned Tuskegee Airmen) of the United States Army Air Forces as a second lieutenant, bombardier, and navigator. As a lieutenant in the 477th, Young played a role in the Freeman Field Mutiny in 1945. Some 162 African-American officers were arrested for resisting segregation at a base near Seymour, Indiana



He was discharged afterwards and returned to Detroit where he resumed his work as a union organizer. He became the director of organization for the Wayne County branch of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. However, Walter Reuther—head of the United Auto Workers—fired Young in 1948 for radical behavior. Young then worked full-time for progressive presidential candidate Henry A. Wallace. Young also helped found the National Negro Labor Council in 1951.

In 1973, Young won election as the first black mayor of Detroit. He was a popular choice among African-American voters. During his tenure, Young lowered Detroit's crime rates. He also led construction projects that helped revitalize the city's economy, such as the \$350 million Renaissance Center business and retail complex in downtown Detroit. However, many businesses and residents still left the city while he was mayor, departures that disrupted the economy.

[**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 wanted to go into the service and felt this was my country.... And even though some forces in the country would deny me full citizenship, I felt I had just as much ownership in this country as anyone else. And should it become my turn to fight for my country, I would certainly do that with as much pride, honor and vigor as anyone else."

~ Tuskegee Airman Lt. Col Harry Stewart Jr.



Tuskegee Airmen pilots, talking over Big Ship manoeuvres at Tuskegee Army Air Field, with airplanes in the background, Tuskegee, Alabama, 1943

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

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN: DID YOU KNOW?

10 July 1943: During the invasion of Sicily, the 99th Fighter Squadron covered the landing of Allied troops at Licata. The men who were tasked with providing cover for the ground troops on that day were the 99th Fighter Squadron (Tuskegee Airmen). This mission was a success in part of the help the ground troops received from the Tuskegee Airmen! (99th Fighter Squadron history, Mar-Oct 1943)

Source "Tuskegee Airmen Chronology," written by Daniel L. Haulman, PhD



Honoring the Women Airforce Service Pilots

FEATURED WASP PROFILE

Madeleine Allaire Bennett

February 15, 1918 – August 3, 2001

Class: 43-W-7

Training Location: Avenger Field (Sweetwater, Tex.)

Planes flown: PT-17, AT-6, B-25

Bases assigned: Mather Army Air Base (Sacramento, Calif.) and March Army Air Base (Riverside, Calif.)

A native of New York City; Bennett grew up in California. After one year of college, Bennett started working and eventually got a job at an aircraft factory. She took flying lessons and in May, 1943 entered the WASP in class 43-W-7 and graduated in Nov. 1943. She received B-25 training at Mather Army Air Base in Sacramento followed, after which Bennett served at March Army Air Base in Riverside.

This period of her life serving as a WASP was one of the high points of her life. She continued to be active in promoting women in flying the rest of her life. She belonged to the WASP organization and the 99th (International Organization of Women Pilots). At one time she and a group of her WASP friends bought and assembled an ultra-light plane and flew it in the Tucson area. She was also an active supporter of the Pima Air and Space Museum and the Arizona-Sonoran Desert Museum.



In the interview that was done in 1995, Bennett discusses her childhood and growing up in Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley, her early fascination with flying and seeing Amelia Earhart at the San Fernando Airport. Bennett discusses her WASP training and her assignment at Mather Field flying the B-25 as well as her life after WASP deactivation when she worked at various jobs, eventually moving to Tucson, Arizona.

In 1994 Bennett received DAR Medal of Honor. This is awarded to an adult man or woman who is a United States citizen by birth and has shown extraordinary qualities of leadership, trustworthiness, service and patriotism.

[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.

WASP QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I'm very optimistic about the world and people... it will be all right... You can make changes. I think just one small person can make a little bit of change."

~ WASP Maggie Gee, Class 44-W-9



Newcastle AAB, Wilmington, Delaware. L-R Vivian Gilchrist, Betty Hanson, and Mary Canavan

Photo courtesy of The WASP Archive, The TWU Libraries' Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX

WASP: DID YOU KNOW?

February 1944 - An Effort to Make WASP Military

Rep. John Costello of California proposes a bill to incorporate the WASP into the USAAF, making the women full members of the military. But there is vocal and active opposition by civilian male flight instructors, who are losing their jobs as the USAAF reduces flight training programs under the assumption that the war is going well.

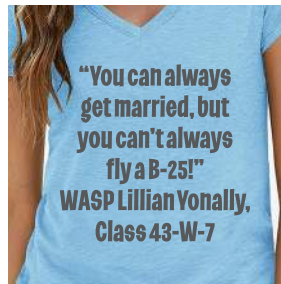
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SHOP WITH WITH A PURPOSE!

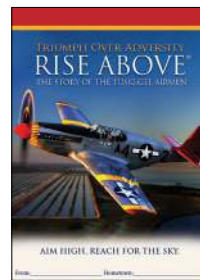
Find great treasures AND honor the history and legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and WASP!
[Visit our online store.](#) *Shipping is included for state-side orders!*



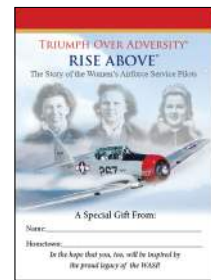
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For \$99 you can join the exclusive ranks of the Top Flight Club!

There's no better way to support our mission to educate, inspire, and honor through flight and living history experiences than by joining a Top Flight Club!

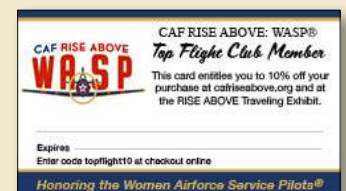
Why 99? *(for each annual membership)*

[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 Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) class of 43-W-1 in Houston, Texas.



Please mail correspondence or donations to our home office at:

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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!](#)



RISE ABOVE: Red Tail - Stay up to date in real time on Twitter

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!

