



# 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 2024



## Inspiration Has No Age Limit

Dave Robertson is an 86-year-old, retired engineer from Niagara Falls, New York. He aspired to be a pilot from the young age of 14 and went on to achieve his commercial pilot license in 1969, flying Cessna 310's and 421's. Unfortunately, 12 years ago Dave had a heart attack, and his medical license was revoked. At the end of March, early April of this year, Dave was diagnosed with congestive heart failure and was hospitalized for two weeks. He was told there was nothing further they could do and gave him two options: hospice or home. Dave consulted with his wife of 30 years, and 4 children one of which is a surgical nurse, and they agreed, hospice is where he should be for his final chapter. Dave received a weekly visit from a nurse, a therapist and a chaplain.

During this time, Dave was determined to try to make a difference. He had too many things he still wanted to do. Dave has been a financial donor to our squadron for the last six to eight years but was insistent on becoming more engaged as a volunteer. At the end of May, he applied to become a RISE ABOVE volunteer at the Rochester Air Show. Dave started eating organic foods and following a plant-based diet. Contrary to the terminal direction he was heading, Dave was released from hospice on Wednesday July 31, 2024. His insulin levels had stabilized, his energy came back, and he started to feel better. Dave was revitalized.

We are honored that Dave was able to make the 6-hour journey from his home in Lincoln University, PA with his son Colin, to join us for his first volunteer event at the Rochester Air Show on August 3-4. In Dave's words, "This is all so inspiring to me". And to keep him motivated, he shared his creed: AIM HIGH, NEVER QUIT, EXPECT TO WIN, BE READY TO GO.

~Melanie Burden

CAF Rise Above Ambassador Coordinator



Dave holds his cell phone where he has adhered the Six Guiding Principles to, and a thumbs up pic in the Mustang!



**Thanks to the amazing CAF Rise Above team and volunteers for all their hard work!**



The CAF Rise Above Team at the Rochester International Air Show. From L-R: Arthur Graham, Chris Allen, Dave Robertson, Duane Sims, Don Larson, Bryan Mettler, Melanie Burden, Bill Shepard



Hubert Looney volunteered with us at Whiteman AFB, MO.



Doug Rozendaal & Kim Pardon are in the air traveling to events more than they are at home this time of the year!



**It takes a small army of volunteers to keep things running smoothly at Oshkosh!**



Bill Shepard



Kevin Sutterfield



LaVone Kay



Ken Mist



Alex Carothers



Carri Carothers



Gabriel Carothers



Milton McGee



Kevin Parks



Steve Kaminsen



Allen Moore



Lex Cralley



Alexandria Benson



Christopher Benson



Bruce Benson



Kierstynn Wehner



# AIRVENTURE AT OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN

*Celebrating Col Harvey's 101st birthday and 75th anniversary of the 1949 Gunnery Competition!*



Squadron leader Doug Rozendaal kicks off the celebration and read a letter from Lucas Films wishing the Colonel happy birthday.

Smiles from the Colonel says it all!



Chris Broom presents a T-7 model from Boeing to Col Harvey.



Mark Nielson of Veterans and Military Affairs Constituent Services Representative from the Office of United States Senator Ron Johnson presented a "Certificate of Special Senatorial Recognition" to Col Harvey.

*Photos courtesy John Slemp*





The Boeing team, our very own Kevin Sutterfield is in the back right!



*Photos courtesy John Slemp*



The birthday cakes provided by Mark Matthews and Joe Johnson were stunning!

*Photos courtesy Alex Benson*





Colonel Harvey with his daughter, Kathy.  
*Photo courtesy Alex Benson*



Layla and her Uncle Sultan traveled to Oshkosh to see the CAF Rise Above Tuskegee Airmen and WASP documentaries, and were able to meet Airman Col James Harvey (who signed her cap!)  
*Photo courtesy Chris Allen*



Colonel Harvey is given a hand made friendship bracelet.  
*Photo courtesy Alex Benson*



Mustang fans!  
*Photo courtesy Steve Kaminsen*



Doug Rozendaal visits with students from the Tuskegee Next organization. The organization mentors under represented kids wanting aviation careers.  
*Photo courtesy Kim Pardon*





Don Larson accepts his service award from Matt Meidwig of KidVenture.



Gabriel Carothers sports a Rise Above hat autographed by 4 Tuskegee Airmen!



Guests traveled from Portugal to meet the Colonel!



Lt Gov Sara Rodriguez, LaVone Kay, RozeLyn Beck and Col Harvey.



Milton McGee enjoys his mustang ride he won as Ambassador of the Year.



Reenactor Wes Davis poses by the Mustang.



Steve Kaminsen worked at Warbird Alley to greet guests at the Mustang.



Allen Moore jsut made this boys day! Sitting in the P-51C Mustang :)







Danielle and Jaden alongside the literal Red Tail, at the Rochester Intl Air Show.



Road Crew and Team Italia Tricolori



Reunited in Rochester!  
Chris Allen, Don Larson, and Amy Marie Beechler



Duane Sims was the Ambassador of the Year for 2023 and took his flight in the Mustang.





## FEATURED TUSKEGEE AIRMEN PROFILE

*America's Tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen*

**1LT Richard Walter “Dopey” Hall**

**January 4, 1921- December 10, 1945**

**Class 43-G-SE**

**100th Fighter Squadron of the 332nd Fighter Group**

Lt. Richard Walter “Dopey” Hall was a WWII US Army Aircorp Tuskegee Airman. He entered the service in Virginia and contrary to the information on the internet he was never in the 99th Fighter Squadron.

Dopey Hall was one of the original pilots assigned to the 100th Fighter Squadron when it was assigned to Selfridge Field, MI. He went overseas with the 332nd FG / 100th FS and he flew a complete tour of mission in the 12th AF in the Bell P-39 Air Cobra and an additional 70 mission with the 15th Air Force flying the Republic P-47D and the North American P-51C before returning to the States in November 1944. He also is also credited with had one ME-109 destroyed on 27 July 1944.

The details of his accident and untimely death of him and 1st Lt. Spurgeon Ellington is as follows.



At 0423, a North American AT-6D flying in poor weather crashed three miles south of the Army Air Base at Atlanta, Georgia, killing pilot 1Lt. Richard W. Hall and pilot rated passenger 1Lt. Spurgeon Ellington. The aircraft took at 0157 from Winston-Salem, North Carolina on a flight to Atlanta Army Air Base. The airplane arrived in the Atlanta area and requested a clearance on the Atlanta radio range. The airplane was cleared but the weather had been deteriorating steadily. Weather at the time of the accident was reported as a 300-foot ceiling. Investigators speculated that the airplane was attempting to let down when it collided with the ground. The aircraft exploded in flames upon impact, scattering wreckage and damaging civilian structures.

[Visit the TUSKEGEE AIRMEN VIRTUAL MUSEUM to see orders SO 105 and SO 106](#)

[\*\*\*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.



## TUSKEGEE AIRMEN QUOTE OF THE MONTH

**“There was constantly before us the challenge to refute the widely accepted belief that blacks could not learn to fly airplanes or participate successfully in combat missions,”  
~Tuskegee Airman Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Jr.**



On this date, the following Tuskegee Airmen event occurred:

14 August 1944: 2d Lt. George M. Rhodes Jr. of the 100th Fighter Squadron shot down 1 FW-190 enemy fighter during a strafing and fighter sweep mission in the Toulon area (Fifteenth Air Force General Order 2831 dated 25 Aug 1944). 2d Lt. Robert O'Neil of the 100th Fighter Squadron was last seen in a spin over the Toulon area, and Lt. Allen was reported to have bailed out safely over the island of Elba. (332d Fighter Group mission report number 51 and 332d Fighter Group history for August 1944). O'Neil eventually returned to his unit after having evaded enemy forces in France for almost two weeks. (Escape, Evasion, and Repatriation Reports, 332d Fighter Group). The strafing mission was in preparation for the Allied invasion of southern France. For their heroic actions on this date, the following four members of the 332nd Fighter Group each earned a Distinguished Flying Cross: Capt. Melvin T. Jackson (302nd Fighter Squadron); 1st Lt. Gwynne W. Pierson (302nd Fighter Squadron); Capt. Arnold W. Cisco (301st Fighter Squadron); and Capt. Alton F. Ballard (301st Fighter Squadron). (Fifteenth Air Force General Order 3689 dated 29 Sep 1944; Fifteenth Air Force General Order 287 dated 19 Jan 1945; Fifteenth Air Force General Order 839 dated 21 Feb 1945; Fifteenth Air Force General Order 1153 dated 5 Mar 1945).

(The above information was taken from the "Tuskegee Airmen Chronology," written by Daniel L. Haulman, PhD, Chief, Organization History Division, Air Force Historical Research Agency)





*Honoring the Women Airforce Service Pilots*

## FEATURED WASP PROFILE

**Kathryn Stark Gunderson**

**1916 – February 12, 2019**

**Class: 43-W-5**

**Training Location: Avenger Field (Sweetwater, Tex.)**

**Assigned Bases: Romulus Army Air Base (Mich.)**

**Planes flown: PT-19 and AT-6**

Gunderson had a lifelong interest in aviation, and began her military career training pilots on the Link Trainer. When she learned of the WASP, she immediately applied and was part of the fifth class of women pilots to fly for the service.

Gunderson flew a variety of missions, according to the report, including towing targets for machine gun practice at Eagle Pass, Texas. Her plane even took one round through its tail, but she was able to land safely. While her daughter Sheila told a CBS4 reporter that she said she was never sure she would return from one of those target-tow missions, she was never afraid of the flights.

Gunderson also delivered new airplanes to bases all over the country, trained pilots on new technology, and ferried service personnel to where they were needed. Gunderson was one of the WASP to receive a Congressional Gold Medal in 2010.

While she truly enjoyed being a mom, she continued flying after leaving the service. She took helicopter lessons in her 80s, according to her daughter Kathryn.

[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

**“If the nation ever again needs them, American women will respond. Never again will they have to prove they can do any flying job the military has. Not as an experiment. Not to fill in for men. They will fly as commissioned officers in the future Air Force of the United States with equal pay - hospitalization - insurance - veterans’ benefits.**

**THE WASP HAVE EARNED IT FOR THESE WOMEN OF THE FUTURE”**

**WASP Byrd Howell Granger, 43-W-1**



Nancy Harkness Love, left, greets Cornelia Fort, Helen Mary Clark, Teresa James, and Betty Gillies, four of the 'Original 27' of the Women's Auxiliary Ferry Squadron (WAFS) as they arrive at the training base in New Castle, DE. James, who donated her WAFS uniform to the Museum, qualified to fly pursuit aircraft such as the P-47 Thunderbolt.

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

## WASP: DID YOU KNOW?

25,000 women applied to be WASPs. 1,830 were accepted. 1,074 graduated.

“The graduation rate of 1,000 in two years equals the entire Air Corps pilot training production rate of the peaceful years prior to 1939.”

~ Walter Kraus, Commanding General of the Central Flying Training Command, December 7, 1944 (Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) of World War II.*)

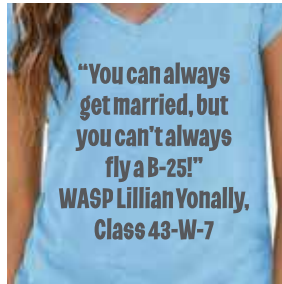


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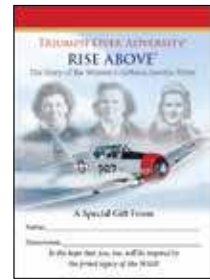
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### [Join RISE ABOVE: RED TAIL](#)

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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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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