



# 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).

January 2025



The 2024 RISE ABOVE tour is in the rearview mirror, but worth a last glance back for all of those who support this unique Commemorative Air Force squadron and the histories of men and women and aircraft it is dedicated to sharing.

From January through November, the Squadron's chief assets - the Red Tail P-51C Mustang and the Traveling Exhibit mobile theater - crisscrossed the country, presenting at dedications, military ceremonies, schools and special events, and air shows large and small. The Exhibit logged over 35,000 miles, by season's end, across 32 states; Exhibit and Mustang combined appeared at over two dozen distinct locations, to over 16,000 guests.

While every place RISE ABOVE stops creates as many unique memories for the squadron as it does - hopefully! - for those who visit, some highlights particularly worth sharing include being a part of the Alabama Air National Guard 187th Fighter Wing's transition to their new F-35s, complete with red tailed P-51s, F-16s and Lightning IIs in tandem flights (sadly F-84s and F-4s in red tail livery could be a part of it only as static displays, a fact that reinforces the importance - and power - of keeping the squadron's vintage Mustang flying); participating in McDill Air Force Base's huge last air show for some time, as base infrastructure undergoes renovation to accommodate new generations of USAF aircraft; seeing the engineering and maintenance the Exhibit is treated to hold up spectacularly against the severe weather of Hurricane Hellene, while in eastern Tennessee; seeing the Exhibit's climate control turned to first aid in the face of scorching heat in Omaha (among other stops - '24 was a \*hot\* tour!); helping make the return of the Amigo AirSho to El Paso, Texas such a success we have been asked - and hope - to return in '25; and returning to the great Columbus, Ohio, Air Show (where we will \*definitely\* be back this year, with some very special legacy plans in the discussion stages) to remeet a young man who had been so inspired by our previous year's visit, he had begun his flight lessons in pursuit of becoming a pilot himself.

A young black American inspired by the story of young black Americans 80 years ago to do something he did not think he could do, before that exposure. That is not an isolated incident. And that - and stories like it - are why the Rise Above Squadron considers the 2024 season another successful one, and will be back on the road - with your support - shortly after you read this, attending even more shows and crossing into even more states and logging thousands more miles in 2025. To commemorate. To educate. To inspire.

Respectfully,



Calling all students  
4th through 12th grade!



Submit your essay for the CAF Rise Above Squadron's essay contest saluting the Tuskegee Airmen or the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)!

Deadline is February 28, 2025

[Using the Six Guiding Principles](#) (**Aim High, Believe in Yourself, Use Your Brain, Be Ready to Go, Never Quit, Expect to Win**) describe how the Tuskegee Airmen or the WASP achieved success, or choose a goal for yourself and show how you could use the Six Guiding Principles to achieve that goal.

Entries will be judged on overall content, including spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Each entry must be an original composition written by the student.

The Essay Contest is open to students in the 4th – 12th grade in an accredited school or home school program during the academic year.

Entries must adhere to the following word count guidelines:

- 4th – 5th grades 250 words
- 6th – 8th grades 350 words
- 9th – 12th grades 500 words

Footnotes, citations, endnotes, and essay titles will not be counted as part of the word count allotment.

Entries must be typed. Each page of the essay must include the author's name, grade level, name of school or home school program, address and telephone number in the upper right-hand corner of each page. This information will not be counted as part of the word count allotment.

Entries become property of the CAF Rise Above Squadron and will not be returned.

Winners will be requested to send their photograph to be featured along with their essay on the CAF Rise Above Squadron website, Facebook page and newsletter.

Entries must be emailed prior to 5:00pm on or before February 28, 2025.

Email your entry to: [info@cafriseabove.org](mailto:info@cafriseabove.org)

Essay contest winners will be announced on March 21, 2025.

Prizes will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners in each grade category as follows

1st place: [Tuskegee Airmen Sculpture](#)

2nd place: [Mustang model kit P-51C "Tuskegee Airmen"](#)

3rd place: Choice of an aviator pin

- [Tuskegee Airman](#)
- [WASP Wing pin](#)

All entries will receive a [Rise Above dog tag](#) and [Triumph Over Adversity booklet](#).

LaVone Kay was honored last month to celebrate this new mural in north Minneapolis honoring the Tuskegee Airmen - note our RISE ABOVE Six Guiding Principles!

John Baker “JT” won our 2017 essay and was awarded one of our leather jacks by Don James, one of our donors.



[See video of entire mural!](#)

#### 2017 essay

My name is James Timothy Baker and I am currently a senior at DeLaSalle High School. I have been flying Cessna and Piper planes since the age of seven through an aviation program located in St. Paul, Minnesota named “Yimaa” which stands for Youth Initiative Mentoring Aviation Academy. Being involved in this amazing program and having the blessing to be able to leave the surface of the earth and fly has been a life changing experience, but my most impactful and influential experience did not happen in a cockpit 20,000 feet in the air, it actually happened on the ground. This meaningful experience was when I was able to meet my role model, mentor, and hero Tuskegee Airman Colonel Charles McGee for the first time. I will never forget this special day, and it has played a huge role in the shaping of my life. Colonel McGee was the most humble and caring man that I had ever met, and he took me under his wing and he became a mentor figure in my life. He inspired me as a young black man to be the best I could possibly be and to always push myself. He also taught me to be caring and to help serve others and to serve the overall community. Colonel McGee taught me what it truly meant to be a Red Tail and he also taught me the main principles that the airmen lived by.

Those principles were to always **Aim High, Believe in Myself, Use my Brain, Be Ready to Go, Never Quit, and always Expect to Win.** These principles have always stuck with me and I use them to guide my everyday life. I particularly always remember to “Believe in myself” and this has allowed me to set high goals and achieve them. I have also used these principles to inspire and influence other students and young kids that are in my community. I believe that Colonel McGee and all of the Tuskegee Airmen paved the way for equality and justice and truly changed the world for the better. I am so appreciative for being able to know such an incredible man as Colonel McGee and to also be able to use the story of the Tuskegee Airmen to better my life as well as the lives of everyone around me.



JT Baker and his parents John and Alice received a Tuskegee Airman statue from RISE Above



## FEATURED TUSKEGEE AIRMEN PROFILE

*America's Tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen*

**Walter Gilbert Alexander, II**

**1922- 2009**

**Class: 45-D-SE**

**Graduation Date: 6/27/1945**

**Service #: 0842999**

Walter Gilbert Alexander II was born in 1922 in Petersburg, Virginia. He was born into a family with multiple generations of doctors who migrated from Virginia to New Jersey following a chain migration pattern. Alexander was named for his great uncle, Walter Gilbert Alexander—a Virginia-born physician and politician who settled in Orange, New Jersey, and became the first African American elected to the New Jersey state legislature in 1920. Alexander's father was a dentist who decided to relocate to New Jersey to join other members of the family; he was active with the NAACP. His mother attended Fisk University and worked as a social worker for the City of Orange.

In 1943, Alexander became the first African American student to graduate from the Rutgers School of Engineering. After graduation, he first went to Los Angeles for an engineering job with Douglas Aircraft and then decided to enlist in the war effort.

As a young man during World War II, Walter G. Alexander II was training to become an aviation cadet at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. From the flight line, he was watching the other cadets take off during their training. The irony was that before he arrived at Tuskegee, Alexander had never been on a plane in his life. Fortunately, an instructor pilot at the base offered Alexander a ride in the air.

He completed pilot training at Tuskegee just as World War II was coming to an end in 1945. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant with the Army Air Force, but did not fly a combat mission. After his discharge from the military, he struggled to find an engineering job in the swollen post-war job market in a profession that only offered African Americans very limited opportunities.

Alexander then decided to fulfill his father's long-held hope of carrying on the family legacy in medicine. He went to dental school at Howard University and graduated in 1952 with a doctorate in dental surgery. He returned to New Jersey to practice dentistry. Twenty years later he once again added another "first" to his list: this time becoming the first African American to serve on the New Jersey State Board of Dentistry from 1972 to 1977. He continued practicing dentistry until 2007.

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

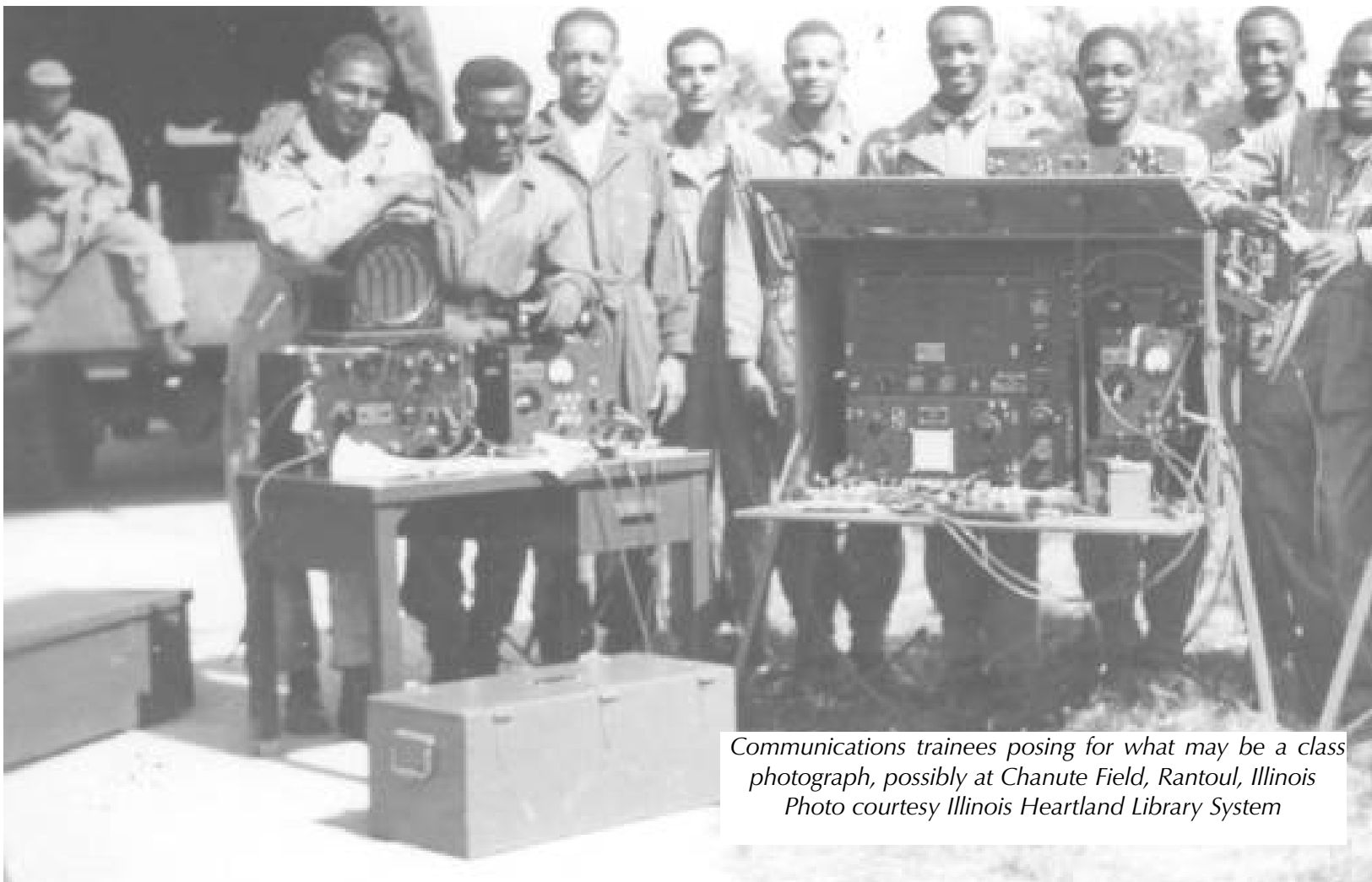


Learn more about the [\*\*CAF Red Tail Squadron\*\*](#), whose mission is sharing the inspiring legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen, America's first black military pilots and their support personnel. Their strength, courage, and ability to triumph over adversity during WWII can serve to inspire others about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

## TUSKEGEE AIRMEN QUOTE OF THE MONTH

**“You just have to have perseverance. Set your goal and go for it.”**

**~Tuskegee Airman Colonel Woodrow Crockett**



*Communications trainees posing for what may be a class photograph, possibly at Chanute Field, Rantoul, Illinois  
Photo courtesy Illinois Heartland Library System*

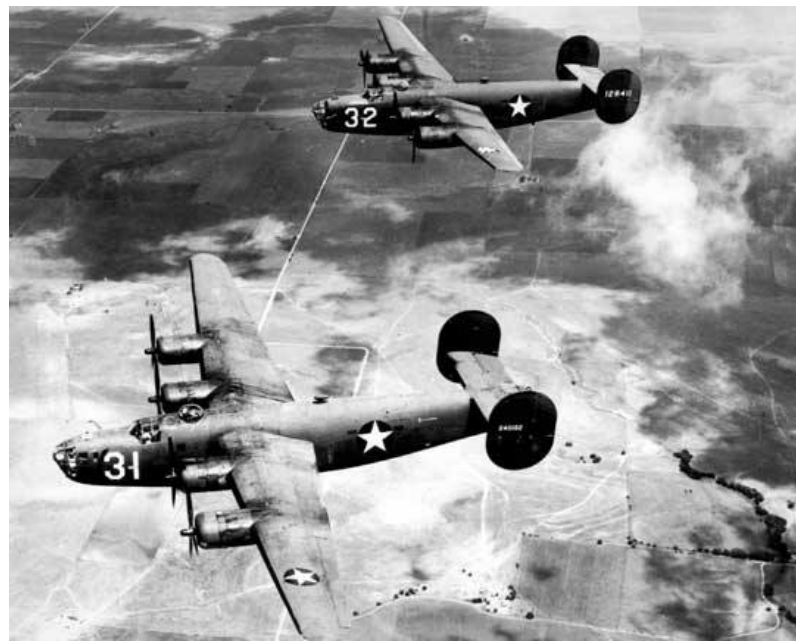
## TUSKEGEE AIRMEN: DID YOU KNOW?

On this date, the following Tuskegee Airmen events occurred:

8 January 1944: 1 Lt Thomas J. Collins succeeded Maj. John G. Cooke, Jr., as Commandant of Cadets at Tuskegee Army Air Field. (History of The Corps of Aviation Cadets, Tuskegee Army Air Field, Alabama, AFHRA call number K289.28-1, 1 Aug 1941-1 Mar 1944).

8 January 1945: After two days without missions, the 332d Fighter Group escorted B-24 Liberators of the 47th Bombardment Wing to and from the marshaling yards of Linz, Austria (Germany). (332d Fighter Group mission report number 150)

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





## FEATURED WASP PROFILE

**Dorothy J. Allen**

**November 5, 1918 – October 1, 2006**

**Class: 44-W-4**

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

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

**Assigned bases: Foster Army Air Field (Victoria, Tex.), Laredo Army Air Base (Tex.), Aloe Army Air Field (Victoria, Tex)**

In 1997 Dorothy was interviewed by Texas Woman's University as part of an oral history project. Below is a summary of that history, courtesy of TWU.

Dorothy Allen was born in Wellsville, Utah on November 5, 1918 to James J. Allen and Sarah Edna Maughan Allen. After graduating high school in 1939, Allen attended the University of Utah; however, she had a difficult time staying awake in classes and had to drop out because of severe tonsillitis. She then went to work for her uncle as a secretary. She decided that she was not making a lot of money and went to work for Remington Arms. Allen decided one day to start taking flying lessons, and to make the commute of lessons easier, she quit her job at Remington Arms and went to work at the airport. One day, Allen heard that Ethel Sheehy was in her town recruiting for the Women Airforce Service Pilots [WASP] program. She and another girl decided to go talk to her. Allen only had about 8 hours of flying time, but Ms. Sheehy told her to write her when she accumulated the rest of her hours. Allen finally finished accumulating hours and was accepted into the WASP class 44-W-4. Following graduation from the WASP program, Allen was stationed at Foster Army Air Field in Victoria, Texas and also Laredo Army Air Base in Laredo, Texas. After deactivation in 1944, Allen returned to Salt Lake City and began driving a yellow cab and then worked for an advertising agency. In 1949, Allen joined the Air Force Reserve. Then in 1954, she moved to California and worked for the Interstate Restaurant Supply Company from which she retired in 1985.



[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.

**Never say 'No.' You might miss something!**  
**Lillian Epsberg Goodman**  
**WASP 43-W-5**



Ferry pilot of the ATA in the cockpit of a Supermarine Spitfire fighter, September 1944.

ATA pilots deliver newly manufactured aircraft from the factory to military airfields

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

**WASP: DID YOU KNOW?**

The first woman to train as a pilot with the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, and graduate in the first class of WASPs, was Betty Gillies. She and Nancy Harkness Love later became the first women to pilot and ferry the Boeing B-17 bomber fortress. Gillies had over 1,000 hours of flying time by 1942, significantly more hours than what most male pilots had acquired.

# SHOP WITH WITH A PURPOSE!

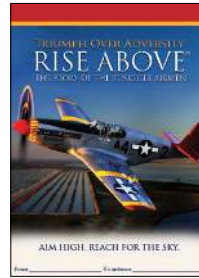
Find great treasures AND honor the history and legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and WASP!  
[Visit our online store.](#) Shipping is included!



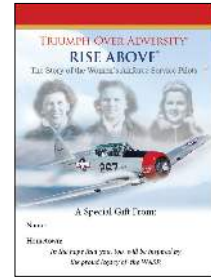
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## For \$99 you can join the exclusive ranks of the Top Flight Club!

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.







# 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 (802) 371-8838 or email [logistics@cafriseabove.org](mailto:logistics@cafriseabove.org) for more information.

## We Need Your Support!



The CAF RISE ABOVE is a part of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF), a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.

The mission of CAF RISE ABOVE is to educate audiences across the country about the history and legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and the WASP - so their strength of character, courage, and ability to triumph over adversity may serve to inspire others to RISE ABOVE obstacles in their own lives and achieve their goals.

The operation of the P-51 C Mustang Tuskegee Airmen and the RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit are dependent on the generous support from people like you!

Here's how you can help:

[Make a one-time or recurring donation online.](#) Dedicate your gift in the following ways:

- Make a memorial gift to the Squadron to honor someone's memory. For donations of \$50 or greater the names will be listed on the online [Honorary Flight Log](#).
- [Join the Top Flight Club: Red Tail!](#)
- [Join the Top Flight Club: WASP!](#)

Purchase memorabilia, books and gifts from our [online store](#)

Join [The Heritage Club](#): The Heritage Club is made up of CAF supporters who have included CAF in their estate planning. Once you have added CAF as a beneficiary in your will, fill out this form, email it to [development@cafhq.org](mailto:development@cafhq.org), and join our legacy club. If you don't have a will yet, check out [FreeWill](#), a **free** estate planning tool which is provided as a benefit for our CAF members and supporters. Gifts from your estate may be designated as unrestricted or restricted to a specific aircraft, unit, or the CAF's endowment.

***Do you need to make a charitable gift from your IRA before the end of the tax year?***

Check out [Smart Giving from Your IRA](#) on the CAF website or contact your IRA administrator **TODAY** to arrange a QCD before the end of the year.

Please mail correspondence or donations to our home office at:

CAF RISE ABOVE®  
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Red Wing, MN 55066



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**Follow us on Instagram**

Check out archived photos and highlights as we tour the country!

[RISE ABOVE: Red Tail](#)

[RISE ABOVE: WASP](#)

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[\*\*You can order these inspirational dog tags here!\*\*](#)