



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).

March 2025



Edwards Air Force Base, California, is aviation hallowed ground - built around Rogers Dry Lake, a vast 'natural runway' described by General 'Hap' Arnold as 'level as a billiard table,' it has - from the moment Chuck Yeager cracked the sound barrier there in the X-1 - been the premier site for advanced research, testing and development for the United States Air Force and NASA.

And while that research requires it remain a secure base, accessible only by authorized military or select sponsorship, on March 7 the CAF Rise Above Traveling Exhibit visited historic Edwards under just such an invitation, to help bring the history of the Tuskegee Airmen, on the 83rd anniversary of the Squadron's first graduating class, to the men and women of the Air Force, Boeing and related support working hard to ready America's first true fifth-generation fighter trainer, the T-7A, for service.

From the time it was first unveiled to the public, the T-7A has proudly worn a red tail, and flown alongside the Squadron's P-51C - and for its first (and only, for some time yet, as its flight testing continues and remains top secret) public recognition at Edwards, the Air Force wanted to reinforce the legacy and inspiration drawn from the Airmen. The day began with a presentation on the 332nd by family and scholars, transitioned to a perfect day outside, where a portion of the Edwards ramp was opened with the T-7A presented alongside a vintage Mustang, an F-16 and F-35 'Red Tails' from the 187th Alabama Air National Guard, and concluded with those aircraft in flight together overhead.

And your Exhibit was there, sharing the documentary and history to give context.

It was a tremendous honour to be asked, and hopefully to deliver on the expressed intent of those at Edwards and Boeing, that the importance of the legacy of the Airmen continues to be felt in the T-7A program.

CAF Rise Above continues its return to the American West at MCAS Yuma, Arizona, March 15, then Nellis AFB, Nevada, Altus AFB, Oklahoma and Dyess AFB, Texas in April before returning to Langley, Virginia to begin a summer in the East and Midwest!

Respectfully,

Chris Allen
Rise Above Road Exhibit Director

2025 RISE ABOVE TOUR SCHEDULE

[Check online for updates and more information!](#)

Mar 12-15	AZ - Yuma Airshow
Apr 5-6	NV- Aviation Nation
Apr 11-13	OK - Altus Air Power Stampede
Apr 19-20	TX- Wings Over Texas
Apr 25-27	VA- Air Power Over Hampton Roads
May 19-26	AL - Rise Above/Air Power History Tour, Birmingham
Jun 10-11	VA - Aim High for Excellence
Jun 13-14	VA - TAKE IT TO THE STREETS
Jun 21-22	OH - Dayton Air Show
Jun 27-28	OK - Tinker Air Show
Jul 3-6	OH - Liberty Aviation Museum
Jul 11-13	OH - Lorain County Discover Aviation Airplane & Car Show
Jul 21-27	WI - EAA AirVenture, Oshkosh, WI
Aug 15-17	NH - Aviation Museum of New Hampshire
Aug 22-24	OH - Columbus Air Show
Aug 30-31	MO - Wings of Pride Air Show
Sep 13-14	TN - Smyrna Rotary Intl Wings of Freedom
Sep 18-21	CO - Great Colorado Air Show
Sep 27-28	CO - Wings of Pride Air Show
Oct 16-19	TX - Amigo AirSho
Oct 30 - Nov 2	MS - Thunder Over The Sound
Nov 11 - 16	MO - Negro Leagues Museum

OUR APPRECIATION.....

On behalf of the entire Commemorative Air Force Rise Above Squadron, I want to extend our deepest gratitude to Melanie Burden for her many years of dedicated service as our volunteer coordinator. Melanie's commitment, passion, and hard work have been instrumental in ensuring the success of our mission, and we are truly grateful for everything she has done.

Melanie's ability to organize, inspire, and support our volunteers has not only strengthened our team but has also played a vital role in sharing the powerful story of the Tuskegee Airmen and the WASP with communities across the country. Her leadership has made a lasting impact, and her efforts have helped us educate and inspire countless individuals.

We recognize and appreciate the countless hours she has devoted to coordinating volunteers, managing events, and ensuring that everything runs smoothly. Melanie's dedication has not gone unnoticed, and we are incredibly fortunate to have had her as part of our team.

As Melanie moves forward to new adventures, we want her to know her contributions will always be valued and remembered. We wish her all the best in her future endeavors and hope she will always remain a cherished member of the CAF Rise Above family.

With heartfelt thanks and appreciation,

Doug Rozendaal
Squadron Leader



Welcome, Milton McGee!

We are thrilled to welcome Commemorative Air Force Rise Above volunteer Milton McGee as our new Volunteer Coordinator! Milton brings a passion for aviation history and a commitment to honoring the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and WASP. We are excited to have him on board to help support and grow our incredible team of volunteers.

Please join us in giving Milton a warm welcome!



Pictured is Ambassador Duane Sims with the limited edition P-51C print he was awarded for volunteering.

"I first volunteered with Rise Above Red Tail 10 years ago in 2015 at the Cleveland International Airshow.

I made sure that I had my Red Tail "Project Sponsor" hat on. That initial mailing for donations for sponsoring the restoration was the spark that led me on to volunteering with the Squadron."

EVENT PHOTOS - TALLAHASSEE

We had an absolute blast at the exhibit. There was a wealth of information woven into the film and presentation. I was blown away. The level of engagement was impressive, and it was a perfect balance of teaching about Black History, Empowerment, and encouraging STEM careers. I would love to bring a different group next year.

Shacoby Ingram
First Grade Teacher
Hawks Rise Elementary



Students (and faculty!) from the nearby Lively Technical Academy for Aircraft and Airframe Mechanics walked across Tallahassee Intl Airport before school Thursday morning, to experience the CAF Rise Above's documentaries about the Tuskegee Airmen and WASP!

Sporting patches including the WASP Congressional Gold Medal and the red-tailed Boeing T-7A next-generation jet trainer, Lily added her Rise Above squadron dog tags



Riverside Middle School Tallahassee FL



Astoria Park Elementary 2nd Grade

GUEST TESTIMONIES

This event was attended by myself, my husband, adult son and spouse and 6-year-old granddaughter. Each one of us have always been interested in aviation. I have my private helicopter license and belonged to the 99 club in NJ back in the 90's. My adult son has ambition to get his fixed wing license. It was a privilege to share all of this with our granddaughter. I feel the video and trailer presentation were very well done. The Tuskegee Airmen were an amazing group of men who overcame a great deal of adversity to achieve the utmost in the air for our country. It occurred to me as we were watching, that they must have been the best dog fighters in the war! A top-notch skill for that time in history. The Mustang on display for all to see in the hangar was pristine and such a pleasure to see in person. We all enjoyed that aspect of this program. Unfortunately, we were unable to view the video on the WASP as we had time constraints. I went online to see what I could find to educate myself on these amazing women. I learned that both of these divisions were under a classified category for 35 years after WWII ended. This explains why a lot of the information was not available when I was growing up. Sadly, the credit and honor these groups deserved was delayed for a long time due to the classified nature of their work. Thank you for carrying on their legacy for all to be educated and enlightened.

Cindy Lowell

First off, I absolutely love the [resource kits available](#) through your organization!

I work in the Local History & Archives at the Mooresville Public Library in NC. We are getting ready for a community reads month in April with the theme of Firsts in Flight... That means we choose a few books for the whole community to read together along with a variety of other programs related to the topic.

My part is to set up an exhibit, but since we don't really have any artifacts in our archives that relate to the topic, I thought using some of the photos and videos from your resource kit would fit the bill. I wanted to start with the Tuskegee Airmen in February, add a feature on the WASP in March, and keep the whole thing up through the end of April.

Sara McKee



A signed-and-numbered print capturing the Red Tail Mustang Tuskegee Airmen on an escort mission will adorn the historic BAE Systems manufactory in Louisville, Kentucky after the corporation sponsored a week's showing of the Exhibit documentaries.



The Boeing/USAF T-7A next generation jet trainer, red-tailed to honour the legacy of the 332nd Fighter Group, the Tuskegee Airmen, is currently undergoing test flights at Edwards Air Force Base in California, where the CAF Rise Above Traveling Exhibit joined it at Red Tail Rendezvous March 7, a private corporate/military event to honour the date of the first graduating class of Airmen.



Captain Tyler 'GH0ST' Morris and his daughter Journey add a CAF Rise Above challenge coin and dog tags to her collection



Lead Speaker at the Red Tail Rendezvous at Edwards Air Force Base, California, is Colonel (Ret) Richard Toliver, graduate of the Tuskegee Institute, protege and wingman in F-4s in Southeast Asia of both General Charles McGee and General Daniel 'Chappie' James, decorated Air Force Veteran - and firm supporter of the CAF Rise Above Squadron's ongoing mission to continue telling the heroic story of the Tuskegee Airmen.



Red Tail Rendezvous, Edwards AFB, CA



[Watch the T-7A Red Hawk "Red Tail" jet makes debut](#)



FEATURED TUSKEGEE AIRMEN PROFILE

America's Tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen



Rudolph "Val" Archer

April 13, 1929- October 3, 2020

332nd Fighter Group and 100th Fighter Squadron

Archer first tried to join the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps when he was 15, but he was told to come back when he was old enough to serve. At 18, he joined the U.S. Army and was assigned to the Tuskegee Airmen, where he trained as an airplane mechanic and aircraft instrument specialist.

"It struck me immediately, when I reported into this base, that these guys, starting with the MPs at the gate, were really sharp - they were dressed sharp, their presentation was good," he said in the PBS interview. "And then I saw the first Black officer and so I had no idea at that time all the officers were black and everybody else was as well."

Archer was an instrument specialist on the P-47 and C-47 aircraft and later a crew chief. His career spanned three wars and eventually included time as an instructor for TITAN I Intercontinental Ballistic

Missile (ICBM) Squadrons.

He became a crew chief and later served as an instructor for TITAN I Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) Squadrons. Archer became the president of the Atlanta chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. He was among the Tuskegee Airmen who were presented with the Congressional Gold Medal. In 2013, Rep. Henry C. Johnson, Jr. honored Archer on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives and proclaimed May 18 to be Val Archer Day in the 4th Congressional District of Georgia.

After basic training at Wichita Falls, Texas, Val attended technical training at Geiger Field, Spokane, WA and subsequently at Chanute Field, IL. He was fortunate to be assigned to the 332nd Fighter Group, aka the (Tuskegee Airmen) at Lockbourne Air Base in Columbus, OH. From January 1946 – September 1949, he was assigned as an airplane mechanic and later as an Aircraft Instrument Specialist to try the army and on that day, they were processed along with the other men. They passed all the written tests and the physical exam.

"I'm proud of the legacy that we have. A lot of us came from all over, Tuskegee Airmen, we had people who came off of farms and those who came out of cities, but what came out of that experience had an impact on our whole culture at that time, largely because of the success that we had and what that meant for other opportunities." — from a 2016 interview with the Montgomery Advertiser

[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'm proud of the legacy that we have. A lot of us came from all over, Tuskegee Airmen, we had people who came off of farms and those who came out of cities, but what came out of that experience had an impact on our whole culture at that time, largely because of the success that we had and what that meant for other opportunities."

~Tuskegee Airman Rudolph "Val" Archer



Artist Robert Taylor



Honoring the Women Airforce Service Pilots

FEATURED WASP PROFILE



Alice Jean May Starr

July 17, 1920 - June 28, 2023

Class: 43-W-4

Training Location: Houston Municipal Airport (Tex.) and Avenger Field (Sweetwater, Tex.)

Assigned Bases: Romulus Army Air Base (Mich.)

Planes flown: B-25, C-47, UC-78

Known as "AJ", Alice had a life in the sky. By 1941, AJ had her private pilot's license, but her less than 100 hours weren't enough to qualify for the WASP program. Instead, she took a job as a Link Trainer Instructor at the US Naval Air Station until her opportunity to push forward arose. She left her instructor job and was accepted as part of the first WASP class to be trained entirely at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas, class 43-W-4.

Ms. Starr said she logged about 2,000 flying hours in aircraft that included After graduating from the WASP program, AJ found herself in Brownsville, TX to take on pursuit training in the AT-6. She flew and ferried other pursuits such as the Bell P-39 Airacobra, P-40 Kittyhawk, P-47 Thunderbolt, and the P-51 Mustang. The Mustang was by far her favorite, fulfilling a dream to fly that was short-lived but satisfying. "In the 1930's, we had all sorts of heroes, and I remember meeting Amelia Earhart in Englewood," she recalled, adding that the aviation pioneer left such an impression on her that flying became one of the most important things in her life.

Ferrying aircraft in all sorts of weather amid occasional catcalls and harassment from servicemen was often hazardous. By the time the group was disbanded to make room for returning Army pilots in December 1944, 38 women had been killed in accidents.

But by the end of World War II, like other women whose talents and energies went toward the war effort. "We wanted to keep flying in the worst way, but it was not to be," Ms. Starr said. At war's end, she worked for a short time ferrying war-weary bombers for a surplus company until she got a job with the Mallard Air Service at Teterboro Airport. "I flew for them, but I also got stuck with the secretarial work because it was expected of me," she said.

[Read her profile online!](#)

Learn more about the [CAF 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.

“...if they don’t know history, if they don’t place any importance on history, we’re in trouble, because history is so important...no just the history of women, the history of our country!”

~WASP Doris Brinker Tanner, 44-W-4

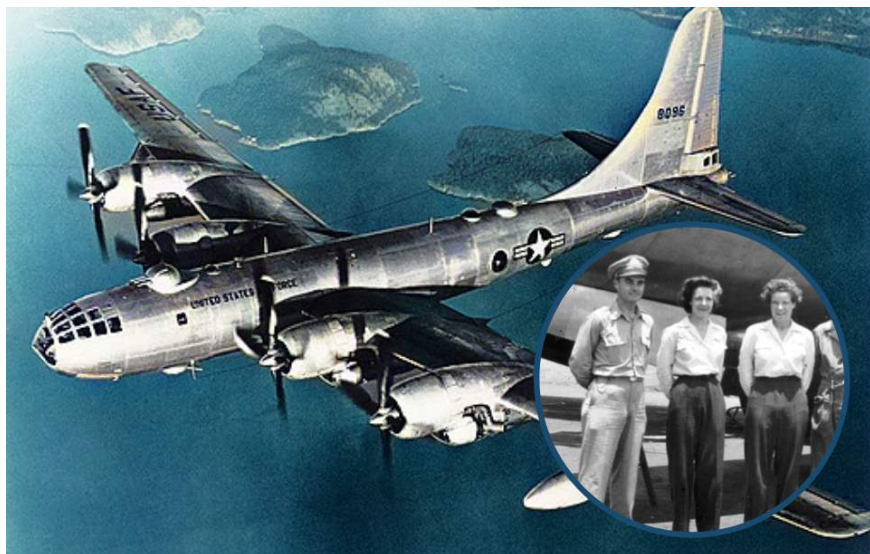


Jane Straughan, Ferry Command, 1943

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

DID YOU KNOW?

In June 1944, the same month as the D-Day Invasion, WASP Dora Dougherty and Dorothea Johnson Moorman flight tested the Boeing B-29 bomber Superfortress "Ladybird" for Colonel Paul Tibbets. Male Airforce pilots refused to flight test the bomber at an AAB at Clovis, New Mexico, thinking the mission too dangerous. Colonel Tibbets called for two WASP pilots to train on the B-29 then complete flight tests of the Superfortress "Ladybird." Dougherty and Moorman successfully piloted the bomber, even while experiencing an engine fire during flight. Colonel Tibbets recalled that, "They did the job. And I don't know how we could have gotten people to fly B-29 airplanes without them." He later served on the Manhattan Project and piloted the B-29 bomber Superfortress "Enola Gay" that dropped the first atomic bomb over Hiroshima in August 1945 at the end of World War II.



On this date, the following Tuskegee Airmen events occurred:

12 March 1944: Class SE-44-C graduated from advanced single-engine pilot training at Tuskegee Army Air Field. There were 22 in that class. On the same day, class TE-44-C graduated from advanced twin-engine pilot training at the same field. There were 5 in that class. A total of 27 pilots graduated at Tuskegee Army Air Field that day.

12 March 1945: The 332d Fighter Group, after not flying missions for two days, flew three missions, as it had on 9 March. Two escorted P-38s on photographic reconnaissance missions, one to the Linz area of Austria (then part of Germany) and one to Munich, Germany. The third mission escorted B-24s of the 47th Bombardment Wing to, over, and from the Floridsdorf oil refinery in the Vienna area of Austria. During the mission, pilots reported having heard on the radio that an aircraft was being jumped by enemy aircraft. (332d Fighter Group mission report numbers 215, 216, and 217). Capt. Walter M. Downs of the 301st Fighter Squadron earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroic actions on this date. (Fifteenth Air Force General Order 3484 dated 29 May 1945).



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

SHOP WITH WITH A PURPOSE!

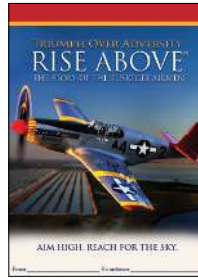
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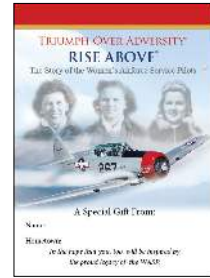
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There's no better way to support our mission to educate, inspire, and honor through flight and living history experiences than by joining a Top Flight Club!

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 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. Email development@cafhq.org for more information.

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:

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[RISE ABOVE: Red Tail](#)

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

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