

Widow of Tuskegee Airman to be Honored Saturday

PALM HARBOR, Fla. (24 July) – On Saturday July 25 U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.), member of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, will salute the courage of the Tuskegee Airmen by presenting Mildred Wilson, widow of Staff Sergeant Elmer Wilson, with a bronze Tuskegee Airmen Congressional Gold Medal for her husband's valiant service during World War II. The presentation will take place at 1:00 p.m. at the Church on the Bayou Presbyterian Church, 409 Whitcomb Blvd., Tarpon Springs, Fla.

The Tuskegee Airmen were a dedicated group of African Americans who enlisted to become America's first black military airmen during World War II as part of the 332nd Fighter Group of the U.S. Army Air Corps. While the group was praised for their work flying combat aircraft against the Nazis, they faced discrimination at home.

“The perseverance and courage exhibited by Staff Sergeant Wilson played an important role in the liberation of millions of people,” said Bilirakis. “I am honored to have the opportunity to help recognize his intrepid service as well as the support and resolve of his wife Mildred, who served as a constant pillar of strength back home.”

In 1942 Elmer H. Wilson, a Philadelphia native, was inducted into the U.S. Army Air Corps. His high test scores and previous mechanical experience led to his selection to the Tuskegee Army Air Field's 99th Pursuit Squadron in Tuskegee, Alabama, where he trained in armament and camera technology. Staff Sergeant Wilson, known to his friends as "Pop Wilson", earned two Bronze Stars and a Good Conduct Medal during his service.

His wife Mildred Wilson is the seventh of 10 children and married Elmer during the summer of 1941. Six months later, Elmer was drafted into the U.S. Army Air Corps. Mildred eventually earned a master's degree in education and taught high school for 19 years while raising four children before retiring. The couple moved to Tarpon Springs in 1988, where Elmer died eight years later. Mildred is still giving piano lessons at the age of 89.

Mildred said her husband never said much about the time he spent as a camera technician in the U.S. Army Air Corps. "They got called all kinds of names," Mildred Wilson said of the Tuskegee Airmen. "But it didn't bother (Elmer).”

This event is open to the media. All media inquiries should be directed to David Peluso at (202) 225-5755. For event information or directions, please contact Congressman Bilirakis’s Palm Harbor office at (727) 773-2871.

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