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Wings & Things Guest Lecture Series

The Tuskegee Airmen: An Illustrated History, 1939-1949

Dr. Daniel L. Haulman, an historian with Air Force Historical Research Agency, discusses the Tuskegee Airmen, who were for decades virtually ignored in American military history and have since become very famous, culminating in early 2007 with the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Dr. Daniel L. Haulman: Thank you. I appreciate you all coming tonight and I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about one of my favorite subjects. Can everybody hear me all right? Okay. I think the microphone is on. Okay. Can you hear me now?

Audience: Oh, yeah.

Haulman: Okay, good. Okay. First of all, I'd like to thank the National Museum of the Air Force for inviting me to speak this evening, and to thank you all for coming to hear about my research regarding the record of the Tuskegee Airmen.

Before I speak about that record, I want to answer two questions that might be on your minds—why am I qualified to speak about a subject like the Tuskegee Airmen? And what is my interest in the Tuskegee Airmen?

I'm qualified to speak about the Tuskegee Airmen primarily because of where I work and where I worked for more than 29 years. I'm in my 30th year working at the Air Force Historical Research Agency. It's the primary repository of documents relating to Air Force organizations such as those that the Tuskegee Airmen belong to.

These documents include the records of the Army Air Forces in World War II. Among them are the monthly histories of the Tuskegee Airmen groups and for those in combat such as the 332nd Fighter Group, their daily narrative mission reports, all written by Tuskegee Airmen themselves during the war. In fact, the daily mission reports were composed the same day as the missions or the day after.

Other important Tuskegee Airmen records from World War II at the Air Force Historical Research Agency are the 12th and 15th Air Force General Orders that awarded various Tuskegee Airmen as individual's Distinguished Flying Crosses and they earned a total of 96 Distinguished Flying Crosses individually during World War II, and their aerial victory credits. They shot down 112 enemy aircraft during World War II, and for every victory, there's an order that awarded the aerial victory to that individual Tuskegee Airman.

The records also include Missing Air Crew Reports, not only for the 332nd Fighter Group, but also for the Bombardment Groups the Tuskegee Airmen escorted, and the monthly histories and narrative mission reports of those groups. My proximity and familiarity with these documents constitute the most important reason I'm qualified to speak about a subject like the Tuskegee Airmen.

Now, why am I interested in the Tuskegee Airmen? Well, one reason I'm interested in them is because my own father was a B-24 pilot in World War II, and my uncle was a B-17 ball turret gunner in World War II. And both my father and my uncle were very grateful for the fighter escorts they had during World War II.

Now, they were in the 8th Air Force. They weren't in the 15th Air Force like the Tuskegee Airmen, but they did – were flying missions in which they were protected by fighter escorts, and one of my interests in the Tuskegee Airmen is they provided some of the escort that crewmen and bomber pilots and ball turret gunners enjoyed during the war. They had that protection.

I'm also interested in the Tuskegee Airmen because over the past several years I've had the opportunity to know a lot of the original Tuskegee Airmen. Unfortunately, some of them that I've met and known and talked with have passed away since then. You know, when you think about how old the Tuskegee Airmen are, they're all in their upper 80s and early 90s, and more and more World War II veterans are passing away every day.

How many World War II veterans are in the audience? Could you raise your hand if you're a World War II veteran? Okay. Well, I appreciate you coming tonight. And more question, I don't know if we have any Tuskegee Airmen in the audience. Are there any Tuskegee Airmen in the audience? Okay. Well, let me tell you about some of the ones I've met before I get into the book that I'll be talking about and the subject.

Among the other Tuskegee Airmen I've met or members of the Harry Sheppard Research Committee of the Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated – I don't know how many of you are aware of the Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated, but it's not just an organization of veterans who belong to the Tuskegee Airmen organizations such as the 332nd Fighter Group and its squadrons and the 477th Bombardment Group and its squadrons, but also members – they've also included other people who belonged to the Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated, who were interested in the history and the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen. And it's also dedicated to the education of youth who are interested in aviation or who might be interested in aviation. It's promoting aviation among youth – not just Black youth, but Black youth as well.

Among them that I've met is William Holloman. William Holloman was the head of that Historical Research Committee. He passed away in 2010, but he was one of the chief advisors of the George Lucas production team putting together Red Tails. And also, he was an advisor for the people putting together a documentary. A lot of people – more people are aware of the Red Tails movie that's out now at theaters than are aware of the documentary that Lucas also produced in 2011 about the Tuskegee Airmen. It's a

documentary in which many of the original Tuskegee Airmen, such as William Holloman, had been interviewed, and he is one of the Tuskegee Airmen I've come to know and admire very much.

Some of the other Tuskegee Airmen I've met are Bill Ellis and Alexander Jefferson, who were on his team and came with him when they came to do research at the Air Force Historical Research Agency, and the documents, the historical reports, and the narrative mission reports of the Tuskegee Airmen units. Alexander Jefferson, by the way, some of you might be aware of his book—Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free. He was the Tuskegee Airmen who was shot down during World War II and was a prisoner-of-war in Nazi Germany for nine months. It's a very interesting story and he's still pretty active, and goes to speak at different places. So you might have a chance to hear him at some time.

I've also become friends with other Tuskegee Airmen who were not members of that historical committee such as the late Lee Archer. Lee Archer is a Tuskegee Airman who shot down four enemy aircrafts during World War II. Charles McGee is another Tuskegee Airman whose still alive, still active, who goes around speaking about the Tuskegee Airmen, and he shot down an aircraft in World War II. He got a victory credit for that. But he also went on to serving Korea and to serving Vietnam, and he has more combat missions than any other Air Force pilot, and he was an original Tuskegee Airman, Charles McGee.

The first Tuskegee Airman I ever met was Harry Sheppard. Harry Sheppard – I'm sorry – Herbert Carter. Herbert Carter lives in Tuskegee and he's an original member of the 99th Fighter Squadron; started out as a 99th Pursuit Squadron in the first Black flying unit in the Army Air Forces in World War II. And Herbert Carter is full of stories about his experience in the 99th Fighter Squadron in World War II. He's 94 years old now. He lives in Tuskegee, and the last time I saw him was on Veteran's Day at Tuskegee. I went to Tuskegee – the National Tuskegee Airmen Historic Site at Moton Field. I'll tell you more about Moton Field as we get into the slides. But he is still very active, though he is sad because his wife of many, many years passed away just a few weeks ago.

She trained at Civilian Pilot Training at Tuskegee. And so, if the doors had been opened to woman pilots back then, she might have become a Tuskegee Airman herself. But she trained more than 70 years ago, got her pilot's license. I think it's the first Black woman in Alabama or in the south to get a pilot's license more than 70 years ago. I'm friends with Roscoe Brown, who Dr. Underwood mentioned a few minutes ago, who consented to write the forward to the book that I'll be describing and he shot down a German jet over Berlin on a very famous mission, March 24th, 1945.

Other Tuskegee Airmen who I've come to know were James Sheppard, a P-51 aircraft mechanic, a maintenance crew chief, who worked on the aircraft they flew – P-51s especially toward the end of the war – putting the fuel tanks on the planes and making sure the planes were ready for combat missions. And Wilbur Mason is a Tuskegee airman, who I've come to know because he was the treasurer of the Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated. And I've been to the past five Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated conventions

in a row, and in every convention, I see Wilbur Mason as well as some of the other Tuskegee Airmen, not only original Tuskegee Airman who sometimes come to the conventions but also active in the organization as officer sometimes.

The first historical research paper I wrote about the Tuskegee Airmen addressed their aerial victory credits. For years, I was a historian at the Air Forces Historical Research Agency whose specialty was aerial victory credits. And back in 2005-2006, I decided I wanted to do a research paper for the Society for Military History to which I belonged, and write about a unit's aerial victories and studied just writing about all the aerial victories or the aerial victories credits of one pilot, I decided to choose an organization. And I decided to choose the Tuskegee Airmen because not as much had been written about them as some of the other organizations and I wanted to do my paper on the aerial victory credits of the Tuskegee Airmen.

So in 2006, I wrote that paper and I presented it at the Society for Military History meeting in Kansas State University. And the rest, you might say is history because I got interested in other aspects of the story of the Tuskegee Airmen and wrote other research papers. The paper, incidentally, that I wrote about aerial victory credits is called the "112 Victories" and it was only the first of several historical research papers. Some of which had been turned into published articles by Air Power History. There are at least three of my Tuskegee Airmen papers that had been turned into articles in Air Power History, various issues of Air Power History. It's the journal of the Air Force Historical Foundation.

The most important manuscript I ever composed about the Tuskegee Airmen may well be my very detailed Tuskegee Airmen chronology. I have a chronology of the Tuskegee Airmen that runs to about 70 pages and most of that is in the book that I'll be describing a little later. And the book, I have to say, is not just my work. It's the work of three authors—Joe Caver, who also worked at the Air Force Historical Research Agency, and Jerome Ennels, who works there, too.

All three of us have expertise in the Tuskegee Airmen because their records are stored at the Historical Research Agency. And Joseph Caver and Jerome Ennels were more responsible for the photographs and the captions and half of the chapter introductions. My contribution to the book was mainly half of the chapter introductions and the chronology. So I hope if you're able to get a copy of the book that you'll look at that chronology and you'll see some of the details.

For example, every aerial victory scored by a Tuskegee Airman is documented in there. It's mentioned in the chronology. Every Distinguished Flying Cross that was ever won by a Tuskegee Airman is in the chronology for the day that he earned that, not the day that he was awarded the DFC, but the day of the action for which he earned it.

The book I'll be talking about today is "The Tuskegee Airmen in illustrated history in 1939 to 1949." As I mentioned, I'm one of the co-authors. There were three authors all together. And both of the other authors are African-American. That book in the record of

the Tuskegee Airmen that had addressed – addresses will be the focus of the rest of my presentation.

Now, the significance of the Tuskegee Airmen – one of the most important questions we get is, “why do people sometimes focus on the Tuskegee Airmen?” And one of the main reasons is a very good reason. They were the only Black pilots in American military service during World War II. They were not only the first Black pilots in American military service in World War II. They were the only Black pilots. It wasn't a case like the Army Forces had some first and then the Navy got some and then the Marine Corps. They were the only service that had Black pilots in World War II.

They contributed to the desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces and we'll see how a little bit later when I talk about President Truman. And I think that President Truman was influenced by the record of the Tuskegee Airmen when he issued a famous Executive Order that mandated the desegregation of the Arm Forces.

The first Black general in the Air Force was a Tuskegee Airman, the best know Tuskegee Airman of all. At first he was Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. He later became General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. And if there's disappointment I have in the Red Tails movie and I don't want to know – I don't want to downplay the Red Tails movie. I've seen it three times and I recommend everybody see it. It's a very good movie. But one complaint I have that they don't use his real name. The commander of the 332nd Fighter Group in combat during World War II was Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., and you won't see his name mentioned in the movie. You'll see there's a fictitious name, Colonel Bullard instead.

The first four-star Black general in the U.S. Military was also a Tuskegee Airman, "Chappy" James, Daniel "Chappy" James. And there are exhibitions here at the museum about Daniel "Chappy" James. In fact, I was just a few days ago at Tuskegee University talking to the curator or the archivist at the Tuskegee University Archives, and he showed me shelves and shelves with papers that are the "Chappy" James's papers. So Daniel "Chappy" James has papers that he donated to Tuskegee University that are available if anybody wanted to do a biography of Daniel "Chappy" James, who was incidentally not only the first four-star general, but he was in World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

They proved that Blacks could fly as well as Whites. This is something that was in question at first. And there were many Americans, especially in the American Military, who doubted whether they could perform as well in combat, and they proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that they could fly as well as the White pilots that they served with.

They fought two wars—one against racism at home and within the American military, and of course, the common enemy across the sea, Fascism and Nazism overseas. And because they were fighting two enemies, it was called during World War II in the Black press the Double V Campaign, and "Double V" meant "double victory." And that's the name of that George Lucas documentary, “Double Victory.”

What makes this book different from other books about the Tuskegee Airmen? There are a lot of books about the Tuskegee Airmen. This one maybe has more photos than most of those other books, but it's the type of photos that are in it, too. They have photos in there in that book that are not in a lot of other publications about the Tuskegee Airmen, because it doesn't just focus on the pilots. You know, a lot of times when you hear about the Tuskegee Airmen or you read about the Tuskegee Airmen, you see the fighter pilots and you see the P-51 Mustangs, but there's no mention or very little mention about the other Tuskegee Airmen who flew bombers—B-25 bombers in training during World War II and the 477th Bombardment Group. And there's not much mentioned about all the ground personnel. For every pilot in the air, there were at least 10 on the ground supporting that pilot.

And if you ask how many Tuskegee Airmen were there, if you look at the number of pilots who graduated from advanced pilot training at Tuskegee Army Air Field, you'll see the numbers are almost thousand, 992. But if you look at the number of Tuskegee Airmen, the documented original Tuskegee Airmen, many of which belonged to the Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated. You'll see the number's over 14,000.

The question I hear most often from people asking about the Tuskegee Airmen is a question I can't answer—"how many of them are still around today?" I don't really know. I can give you an idea. At the five Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated National Conventions that I attended the past five in a row, the event at those conventions that draws the most people, the most original Tuskegee Airmen is called the Lonely Eagles Ceremony, and it's a ceremony in which they recognize the original Tuskegee Airmen who died over the course of the past year. And at those ceremonies, you'll see a lot of original Tuskegee Airmen.

If they're at the convention, they're probably at that event. And at those events, there's usually about 50. I'm not saying that there's only 50 Tuskegee Airmen left, because there are a lot of Tuskegee Airmen who aren't able to go to the convention. People like Herbert Carter, I mentioned, who lives at Tuskegee, he's in poor health and he has some mobility problems. Sometimes, he needs a wheelchair, but he hasn't been at any of those five conventions that I've been to. But he is still a very important member of the Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated. He just isn't at those conventions.

So the reason I mentioned that is because there are a lot of Tuskegee Airmen, who I've never met, who haven't been to the conventions, who are still around. So there are probably a lot of Tuskegee Airmen still living even though there are fewer every year.

This book contains, as I said, information about training bases beyond Tuskegee, not just Tuskegee Army Air Field. That's where the basic flying training, the advanced flying training, and the transition flying training took place. But it's not the only base where Tuskegee pilots trained. Before they went into basic flying training, they had primary flying training. Before primary flying training, many of them had civilian pilot training, and there are other airfields around Tuskegee like Kennedy Field, which was owned by Tuskegee Institute at the time, and Moton Field where the primary training took place.

There are three basic fields around Tuskegee where the flying training took place—civilian pilot training at Kennedy Field, primary pilot training at Moton Field and then the basic, advanced, and transition training at Tuskegee Army Air Field. And this book has information about all three of those air fields.

Some of you might have heard about Eleanor Roosevelt visiting Tuskegee Institute and flying with a Black pilot, "Chief" Anderson. I don't know how many of you have heard about that story. It's a very famous story. In March of 1941, she visited the Tuskegee Institute and the civilian pilot training program there, and was taken off by the leader of the civilian pilot training, "Chief" Anderson, and that was at Kennedy Field. A lot of people think it was at Moton Field or at Tuskegee Army Air Field.

This book contains that very detailed chronology that I told you about earlier and it corrects some misconceptions about the Tuskegee Airmen. The biggest misconception of all was the earliest misconception that they weren't as good as the White fighter pilots, that they were inferior. And we'll talk a little bit about some of those misconceptions a little bit later. It's based more firmly than a lot of Tuskegee Airmen publications—magazines, articles, and newspapers, and books—that don't rely as much on the primary source documents. And what do I mean by "primary source documents?" I mean, there are actual histories that they wrote during World War II, monthly histories, and their narrative mission reports after every mission, and their Missing Air Crew Reports, and the orders that awarded them honors such as the Distinguished Flying Crosses and Aerial Victory Credits. These are the primary sources that make this book a little different from some of the others.

Now, statistics about the Tuskegee Airmen – there's a lot of statistics and I want to mention some of them now. As I mentioned before, there were almost a thousand Tuskegee Airmen pilots that trained at Tuskegee, and 311 missions were flown by Tuskegee Airmen in the 332nd Fighter Group for the 15th Air Force. Now, probably most of you have heard about the 8th Air Force flying bombing missions from England over Germany during World War II. But the 15th Air Force doesn't get as much attention as the 8th Air Force. The 15th Air Force was based in Italy and it flew strategic bombardment missions from Italy northward into Germany and other portions of occupied Europe.

They also flew many, many missions, hundreds of missions for the 12th Air Force before they were even assigned to the 15th Air Force. So I don't want you to get the wrong impression. They flew 311 missions for the 15th Air Force, but the total number of missions they flew was many, many more because they flew hundreds of missions for the 12th Air Force before that, 179 of the missions they flew for the 15th Air Force with the heavy bombers such as B-17s and B-24s were to escort those bombers. I said 311 missions for the 15th Air Force. As you can see, there were a lot of missions that were not escorting bombers. There were fighter sweeps or they were escorting reconnaissance planes or they were patrolling. They were flying a lot of other missions – sometimes ground support missions – that were not escorting bombers.

So they flew a total of about 179 bomber escort missions for the 15th Air Force. And a remarkable record, 172 out of those 179 bomber escort missions were without bomber losses. There were only seven missions that the Tuskegee Airmen flew for the 15th Air Force in which Tuskegee-Airmen-escorted bombers were shot down by enemy aircraft. So that's a remarkable record especially when you look at the number of bombers that were shot down on those seven missions. From my research, there were only 27 bombers shot down when they were under the Tuskegee Airmen escort.

The average number that were shot down in the other groups was 46. There were 46 bombers shot down, the average number for the other bombardment group, other fighter groups that were in the 15th Air Force, and there were seven fighter groups in the 15th Air Force. As I said they scored 112 aerial victory credits and I'll tell you a little bit later what they had to go through to get credit. Every pilot in World War II couldn't just come back and claim a credit. He had to go through a process having a witness statement or gun camera film to confirm the kill and also an order cut or a victory credit board report that confirmed the credit.

They earned 96 Distinguished Flying Crosses, and sometimes you'll see publications that claim 150. Well, that's based on something that was written in an early book where the author looked at the 15th Air Force records and he saw that 95 Distinguished Flying Crosses had been awarded by the 15th Air Force for the Tuskegee Airmen, for the members of the Tuskegee Airmen organizations, 332nd Fighter Group and its squadrons. And he assumed that if he looked at the 12th Air Force records that the 332nd was in before that, he might find a comparable number of more Distinguished Flying Crosses and he just guessed that it might be as many as 150.

Well, that number kind of went in circulation and for a while, people were saying they earned 150 credits. But Craig Huntly is a researcher in California with the Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated. He looked at every order that awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses from the 12th Air Force to pilots in their organization. And there was only one Distinguished Flying Cross awarded to a Tuskegee Airman and that was to Charles Hall, the first Tuskegee Airman ever to shoot down an enemy aircraft. So when you add that, there was 96 Distinguished Flying Crosses. There were a lot of Tuskegee Airmen that shot down enemy aircraft before they were members of the 15th Air Force. But most of them got their credits, got an Air Medal instead of Distinguished Flying Cross for that.

Four of the Tuskegee Airmen earned – each earned three aerial victories in one day, which is quite an accomplishment to shoot down three enemy aircraft in one day. And three Tuskegee Airmen, each shot down four enemy aircraft and I could give you their names—Joseph Elsberry was one; Edward Toppins was another; Lee Archer was another; and the guy that got three in one day, the fourth pilot in that second to last statistic there was a Lucky Lester, Clarence “Lucky” Lester.

One name I want to stress a little bit before I get off this slide, I said Joseph Elsberry was one who scored four aerial victories. He scored three of those in one day, and his

roommate – when he was in the Tuskegee Airmen organizations, a new pilot came to be his roommate to share a tent with him, and that pilot was William Holloman, who was the head of the Harry A. Sheppard Historical Research team of the Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated. So William Holloman knew Joseph Elsberry personally, and knew that he had gotten three aerial victory credits in one day and he got a Distinguished Flying Cross for that.

This is a picture, a very famous photograph of the first five graduates of advanced pilot training at Tuskegee. They started off with 13 for primary training, and then they went through the various phases—primary training, then basic training, and then advanced training. And by the time the class finished, there were only five left who had not washed out and these are very famous individuals. On the top left is Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the most famous Tuskegee Airman of all. He was a graduate of West Point. He had gone to West Point. He wasn't the first Black graduate of West Point, but he was the only one at that time and he was ostracized by the other cadets. During the time he was at West Point, people didn't talk to him except on official business, and he describes that in his autobiography. You might be interested in that autobiography he wrote—“Benjamin O. Davis Jr., American.”

George "Spanky" Roberts is in the middle-top of that photograph right there, and some people asked me sometimes, "Since Robin Roberts on Good Morning America is the daughter of a Tuskegee Airman, was she the daughter of George "Spanky" Roberts?" Well, there was more than one pilot in the Tuskegee Airmen whose last name was Roberts, and she was not his daughter, but she was the daughter of another Tuskegee Airman named Roberts. He's a very famous Tuskegee Airman because not only did he graduate in that first class of five, but he was the first Black commander of the 99th Pursuit Squadron, which later became the 99th Fighter Squadron.

You might wonder, "Why was he the first when the West Point graduate, Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. outranked him and it seems like he would've been the first Black commander of the 99th Fighter Squadron? Well, one reason was because when he graduated, they had some official business for him to do in the – at the base of Tuskegee Army Air Field. So later on, he replaced George "Spanky" Roberts as commander of the 99th Fighter Squadron. But they kind of traded command of that squadron, and later, they both were commander of the 332nd Fighter Group, to which the 99th Fighter Squadron was eventually assigned.

The other pilots there are Mac Ross on the top-right there, who was a pilot who was killed during the war in Italy. And the other pilots are Lemuel Custis and Charles DeBow. And those are the five of the most famous Tuskegee Airmen because they were the very first Black pilots in the Army Air Forces in World War II. Now, I want to tell you a little bit about the phases of flying training they went through. First was civilian pilot training. Civilian pilot training didn't go on throughout the whole war. It started before the war started and it ended before the war ended. But at first, there was civilian pilot training at Kennedy Field near Tuskegee, which is in ruins now, there's nothing left of Kennedy Field. We went to the site, some of the other authors and I went to the site,

and it's just a field. They don't have any marker or anything. They really should have a historical marker for that field. That's where Eleanor Roosevelt was taken up by a Black pilot.

The primary took place at Moton Field. Moton Field today is the Tuskegee Airport and Moton Field is where the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site is located. If you go today to the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site, you'll be at Moton Field where the primary training took place. Now, a lot of people have the wrong idea about the training. They think all the training took place at Moton Field and that's not accurate. Moton Field was much smaller than the other air field that they transferred to later.

At Moton Field, they used PT-17 biplanes and PT-13 biplanes. There's only one difference between a PT-17 and a PT-13, and some of you who were familiar with the museum exhibits might know this. It's the maker of the engine. If there was one manufacturer of the engine, it was called the PT-17. If it was the other manufacturer, it was the PT-13. But those planes were used and there's one on display here at the museum, a PT-17 or PT-13. I didn't look at the engine, so I'm not sure which one it is. But it's a biplane that they used to train at Moton Field.

The basic pilot training and the advanced training and the transition training all took place at Tuskegee Army Air Field. I'll show you a photograph of that air field in a little while. But it was a much larger air field that had four runways and Moton Field had only one runway. The civilian pilot training at Kennedy Field didn't have any runways. It was a grass field. The BT-13 aircraft – if you're wondering about the designations of these aircraft, PT stands for "primary trainer"; BT stands for "basic trainer" and AT stands for "advanced trainer".

The BT-13 aircraft – there's one here on display at the museum, too. It was a monoplane. It looked a lot like an 86, which was a trainer that they used for advanced training. And then after that, they had transition training for the fighter pilots in P-40s. Now, some are wondering about the difference between advanced training and the transition training. Most of the White fighter pilots, after they went through advanced training in an AT-6, we'd go to another base and be trained for transition training in a type of fighter aircraft that they would actually fly in combats such as the P-40. But because Tuskegee Airmen or Tuskegee Army Air Field was the only base where Black pilots were trained, then they also had transition training originally there at Tuskegee Army Air Field and they flew P-40 aircraft, the same kind of aircraft that the Flying Tigers flew, and it's same kind of aircraft the 99th Fighter Squadron flew in combat.

The A-10 aircraft was a little bit different. There's an AT-10 on display here at the museum, too. It's a twin-engine aircraft. Eventually, Tuskegee Airmen pilots were being trained not only to be fighter pilots in combat in World War II, but also to be bomber pilots. And Tuskegee bomber pilots trained originally in the two-engine AT-10 aircraft before they moved to B-25 aircraft and they had a couple of B-25 aircraft at Tuskegee Army Air Field as well.

This is a picture of a later class of Tuskegee Airmen Class 45-A. You saw in the first class, there were only five. In this class, you'll see that there are a lot more. The classes grew as time went on, and the number of pilot classes at Tuskegee Army Air Field was 44, and those 44 classes eventually graduated over 990 pilots – 992 pilots at Tuskegee Army Air Field.

And one of the things I should mention before I get off the subject of Tuskegee Army Air Field and the training there is because it was the only place in America where Black pilots could be trained in the military then when foreign pilots trained and some foreign pilots trained in the United States, too. Some British pilots, some French pilots trained at Maxwell Air Force Base where I work. But the Black pilots had to train at, if you were from Haiti or if you were from Trinidad, you had to train at Tuskegee because no other base had Black pilots. And so there were some Haitian pilots and some Trinidadian pilots who also trained at Tuskegee Army Air Field.

This field was between Tuskegee's Moton Field and Tallassee, Alabama. I don't know how familiar you are with Alabama. They probably don't mean a lot to you because Tallassee is not a very big town. But it was northwest of Moton Field. And just a few days ago, I got to go to the site of Tuskegee Army Air Field. It's in ruins now. It's a way out in the country and it's fenced off. There's only a grass and trees and a few little ruined buildings you'll see in the distance. But there is a gate. The owner of the property is a family, the Swanson family, and they are in the timber business. But they fenced off this area so it would be saved for posterity and they put a gate up, and the gate says, "Site of Tuskegee Army Air Field." And that's a very good marker. At least people can look and see where the field was and they see 332nd Fighter Group on one side of the site, which was accurate because the 332nd Fighter Group were stationed there.

But it also says 477th Bombardment Group and there's some truth to that. The 477th Bombardment Group got pilots who were trained there at Tuskegee Army Air Field, but the 477th Bombardment Group was never at Tuskegee. It never was based there. The pilots – the twin-engine pilots who trained at Tuskegee Army Air Field moved to Selfridge Field where they started training in those B-25s.

It was owned by the Army Air Force as the other fields, Kennedy Field and Moton Field, were owned by Tuskegee Institute. And it maybe a little confusing. The primary training was military training, but it was done under contract. Moton Field was owned by Tuskegee Institute and it was contracted out. There were American military pilots who were at Moton Field, who helped with the training. But the field itself was owned by Tuskegee Institute.

The most popular commander at Tuskegee Army Air Field was Noel Parrish. Noel Parrish was a White commander but he's still admired by many of the original Tuskegee Airmen for his fairness. Not all of the White commanders with whom the Tuskegee Airmen were associated were opposing or putting obstacles in their paths. There were some who were putting obstacles in their paths, but Noel Parrish wasn't one of them.

In fact, if you go to a Tuskegee Airmen Convention, like I have for the past five years, one of the final parts of the convention is an award ceremony and the wife of Noel Parrish is still alive and she presents the Noel Parrish Award to one of the Tuskegee Airmen and Tuskegee Airmen consider this the best, the most outstanding award in the Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated. It's a gold medal.

This is an aerial view of the Tuskegee Army Air Field in World War II. On the left, you can see, it was a very active field. You see, there are four runways there. You see the built-up area of the base over here and you see that there were a lot of runways. If you look at the same site today, you might Google it and see what it looks like. If you know where to look in Alabama, northwest of Tuskegee, southeast of the Tallasse, you'll see something like this instead and you may wonder, "Why there's only one runway preserved? Why was that one preserved and the other ones were not preserved?" While I was talking to Jerome Ennels, who was one of the other authors of the book, and he told me that one reason was because after this field was closed in 1947, it lay unused for a long time and somebody finally bought the property and put a drag strip there and used one of the runways for the drag strip. So, it was a blessing in disguise that at least it preserved that one runway for that.

This is a picture of Noel Parrish, the commander at Tuskegee Army Air Field. He started out at Moton Field with a primary training. He was the director of training there, and then he moved to Tuskegee Army Air Field where he was the director of training there serving under another officer. And then after the other officer left, he became the commander of this flying school at Tuskegee Army Air Field and the commander of the base. And there was an incident that happened in World War II just to show his fairness where there was a question about eating in a restaurant. There was a section in the restaurant that was reserved for Whites and a section reserved for Blacks. They could both use the restaurant, but there were certain sections of the restaurant where they had to sit.

And some of the Black officers didn't like being segregated in that facility. And so they entered the restaurant and they demanded to be able to sit wherever they wanted and they had a copy of an Army Regulation that said that if you were an officer in the Army, you have equal access to the restaurants and the dining facilities in the Officers Clubs. And the owner of – not the owner of the restaurant, but the manager of the restaurant on the base decided to allow them to sit where they wanted. And the case, of course, went to Noel Parrish and he said, "We're going to have integrated seating. We're going to have integrated officers club, integrated restaurant. There will not be segregation on his base."

The 99th Pursuit Squadron was the first Black flying unit in the Army Air Forces, the first Black flying unit in the American Military. It was originally called the Pursuit Squadron, later changed to Fighter Squadron, and it was also the first to deploy. I want to tell you a little bit about the origins of it, because if you look at my chronology, you'll see that the 99th Pursuit Squadron was activated not at Tuskegee but at Chanute Field in Illinois. And people are sometimes a little confused about that. It was actually activated

before Eleanor Roosevelt's flight at Tuskegee. The first Black flying unit originally had no Black pilots. It had the support personnel.

Now, the Army Air Forces had already announced we were going to have a Black flying unit. We're going to have a Pursuit Squadron. But it didn't have pilots at first. First, they trained the ground support personnel at Chanute and then it moved to Tuskegee. And after it moved to Tuskegee, at the same time, the various phases of flying training were being pursued. And finally, in March of 1942 when that first class graduated, then the 99th Pursuit Squadron, then called the 99th Fighter Squadron, got pilots.

It deployed in April of 1943 overseas from Tuskegee and its most famous commander was Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. He had become the commander of the squadron by then in place of George "Spanky" Roberts. But George "Spanky" Roberts remained in the organization and was there to assume command again when Benjamin O. Davis Jr. went back to the United States to become commander of the 332nd Fighter Group.

If you go see Red Tails – how many of you have seen Red Tails already? Okay, that's a lot of you. If you see Red Tails, the Cuba Gooding character is Spanky Roberts, George "Spanky" Roberts. He was the commander of the 99th Fighter Squadron after the former commander Colonel Benjamin O. Davis went back to get the 332nd Fighter Group and bring it to Italy for combat.

They first flew P-40s – that's also in the movie. The P-40s were the same kind of aircraft the Flying Tigers flew. It's a beautiful aircraft but it wasn't nearly as fast to some of the other aircraft. It wasn't suitable for bomber escort. So they didn't have bomber escort at first. The P-40s were good though at patrol and ground support missions.

Now, it's a little deceptive in the movie. You know, it makes it look like the P-40 Squadrons were way behind enemy lines and they weren't having any combat operations. And in reality, when the 99th was over there, it was attached to White fighter groups. It wasn't assigned to those White fighter groups. But, you know, a squadron in World War II couldn't act by itself. Typically, a fighter squadron was one of three fighter squadrons assigned to a fighter group.

Most fighter groups had three squadrons. When the 99th went over there, it was the only Black squadron. And so, instead of assigning it to a fighter group, because they didn't have the 332nd over there yet, they attached it to a fighter group that already had three other squadrons. And so, the Tuskegee Airmen in the 99th Fighter Squadron were attached at various times to four different White fighter groups, and when they were flying missions with those groups, they were flying the same kinds of missions as the other P-40 squadrons. They would fly together on those missions.

And one of the first missions they flew was over the island of Pantelleria. I don't know how familiar you are with World War II history, but the island of Pantelleria was in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea between Italy and North Africa, and the 99th Fighter

Squadron, one of its first missions was to fly with other P-40 squadrons to attack that enemy held island of Pantelleria.

Other air units were attacking that island. The naval units were attacking that island, and one of the important lessons of World War II is an island like that can surrender without an invasion and that's what happened with Pantelleria. The Italian forces and German forces that were at Pantelleria surrendered without an invasion and part of the reason was the air strikes on the island by those P-40 squadrons including the 99th. It served the 12th Air Force at first, which was a Tactical Air Force. I don't know how familiar you are with the 8th Air Force and the 9th Air Force in England.

The 8th Air Force was flying the bombers and had fighter escorts with the bombers. The 9th Air Force was flying tactical missions in support of the ground forces. It was the same way in Italy or from Italy. They had the 12th Air Force in Italy supporting the ground forces with P-40s and P-39s and aircraft like that. The 15th Air Force was flying the heavy bombers deep in the enemy territory.

During the time the 99th was attached to those P-40 groups in Italy, it earned two Distinguished Unit Citations while it was attached to those groups. And the way it was set up at the time, you don't find an order that says the 99th Fighter Squadron earns the Distinguished Flying Cross. What you do is find an order that says the 324th fighter group, the P-40 group that it was attached to, earns the Distinguished Flying Cross or Distinguished Unit Citation, and all the squadrons that belonged to the group also earned the Distinguished Unit Citation.

So the two Distinguished Unit Citations the 99th earned, well, while it was flying with those P-40 groups to which it was attached, one of those Distinguished Unit Citations were for operations over Sicily during the island invasion of Sicily, and the other one was a Casino flying ground support operations for the troops at Casino.

I've talked about the 99th Fighter Squadron, but the 332nd Fighter Group has another story. You have to almost look at him as two separate chapters in Tuskegee Airmen history, because the 99th was the first and it flew P-40s and it went to North Africa and Sicily in Italy. It had a story already. If you read the biography of Charles Dryden, who was a very famous Tuskegee Airman, he wrote a book called "A-Train." His nickname was A-Train.

But if you read his book, you'll see only information about the 99th Fighter Squadron. You won't see anything about bomber escort missions. You won't see anything about P-51s or Red Tail P-51s, because he came back to the United States after – I'm sorry, before the 332nd even deployed overseas. And so, I want to talk about the 332nd.

It first had three fighter squadrons like the other fighter groups in World War II, the 100th, 301st and 302nd. All of those three squadrons plus the 332nd Fighter Group were first activated at Tuskegee. That was different from the 99th. Remember the 99th was first activated at Chanute up in Illinois. But this group and all three squadrons were first

activated at Tuskegee. At first, the 99th wasn't assigned to it even though it was originally based at the same place. It was practiced for combat at Selfridge Field. So after the pilots were trained at Tuskegee Army Air Field, then the unit, the group, and its three squadrons moved to Selfridge Field Michigan and they had their transition training there. But they trained in P-40s. They trained in P-39s.

I don't know how many of you have seen the P-39 here on display. P-39 is a very unusual type of aircraft. It has a cannon in the nose, and the cannon takes up so much of the front of the aircraft that the engine of the aircraft is behind the pilot. It's an aircraft that the Russians loved in World War II, and they liked it so much that they got the Americans to ship many P-39s to them. I wrote a paper once about the shipment of allied aircraft, American aircraft, to the Soviet Union during World War II, and a lot of them flew across Western Canada into Alaska, and the Russian pilots picked them up there. Most of those aircraft were P-39s because the Russians loved them. They were great for attacking ground targets, for attacking tanks on the ground. And that's the way they were used by the 332nd. The P-39s used by the 332nd were used for ground support missions originally.

Benjamin O. Davis, as I said, went back to command the 332nd and he brought the group to Italy in early 1944. They arrived in February. They did some transition training and they started flying their missions in the winter of 1944. They served the 12th Air Force at first, but the difference between them and the 99th, which wasn't yet assigned to the 332nd, was the 99th was flying the P-40s and the 332nd was flying P-39s. But they were flying the same kinds of missions during that part of the war.

My favorite photograph, Tuskegee Airmen photograph, is this one. It's a picture of Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. on the left, the most famous Tuskegee Airman, who was the commander of the 99th Fighter Squadron at first, and then he became commander of the 332nd Fighter Group. If you look in the Red Tails movie, at somebody who represents him, it would be Colonel Bullard. Colonel Bullard in the movie should've been called Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. That's him on the left. He later became the first Black general in the Air Force.

The guy on the right is his father, Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., the first Black general in the Army. He was a Brigadier General at the time, and this ceremony took place in September of 1944. But the Distinguished Flying Cross that he's pinning on his son's chest was awarded for a mission that he flew, or that he led, on June 9th, 1944, right after the 332nd started bomber escort missions.

In the spring of 1944, very crucial time for the Tuskegee Airmen. They switched aircraft and there's a mistake here I have to correct. That P-30 should be P-39. So they switched from P-39 aircraft designed for attacking targets on the ground to P-47 aircraft, which had a longer range and they could fly faster. They were more suitable for bomber escort. And the 332nd Fighter Group and its three squadrons were reassigned to the 15th Air Force that had the heavy bombers like the B-17s and the B-24s. It moved to Ramitelli Air Field. If you see the Red Tails movie, you'll see Ramitelli mentioned. They show an air

field that's supposed to be Ramitelli. It looks pretty much like it if you look at the pictures of the original Ramitelli Air Field. I think the air field they used in the Red Tails movie is in Czechoslovakia, but it looks close.

Ramitelli was actually on the shore of the Adriatic Sea. You don't see water on the background, but there was water in the background at Ramitelli. And in early June, they began escorting B-17 and B-24 heavy bombers to targets deep inside Germany. They gave them more opportunity to shoot down enemy aircraft even though they had already shot down some enemy aircraft on those 12th Air Force missions. These are the stations of the 15th Air Force groups, and one reason I wanted to show this was to show that the fighter groups were based closer to the front lines than the bomber groups were. That allowed the bombers to take off and then the fighters to rendezvous with them on the way to the targets.

Another reason I wanted to mention this is because you see how many groups there are. There were a total of seven fighter groups in the 15th Air Force during World War II. Four of them flew P-51s and three of them flew P-38s. The bomber groups flew B-17s and B-24s, but there were 21 bomber groups. So when you think about it, seven fighter groups to escort 21 bomber groups. There were a lot more bombers than there were fighters to escort them. So it was a very difficult mission for the fighters to protect the bombers because many times, there were many more bombers than there were fighters to protect them. And many times, sometimes, there were more enemy fighters than there were friendly fighters to protect the bombers.

These are some pictures of the bombers they escorted. On the left is a B-17, the Flying Fortress, and on the right, the B-24, the Liberator. My father flew a B-24 like this. My uncle was a ball turret gunner in a B-17 and they told me a lot about these planes. They had a lot of friendly arguments about whether the B-17 or the B-24 was better and you might have heard some of those arguments, too.

Generally, the B-17 could fly higher and it was more survivable if it were hit. See, the wings were wider. It could glide some more. It was more survivable if it were hit. The B-24 advantages were it could fly farther and it could fly faster. The wings were narrower. It gave it a greater speed, but they could generally hold about the same amount of bombs.

July 1944 was also a crucial month because that's when the 99th Fighter Squadron finally joined the 332nd Fighter Group. Somebody finally realized while there's a 99th Fighter Squadron over here that's black, there's a 332nd Fighter Group over there that's black. They wanted to put them together. And some of the members of the 99th actually resented being assigned to the 332nd because then it seemed like it was more segregation. You know, we're putting all the Black pilots together. And some of them enjoyed being attached to White fighter groups and flying with them. If you talk to original Tuskegee Airmen who belonged to the 99th, sometimes they'll say that they didn't relish the idea of being part of the 332nd, but once they were assigned to the 332nd, they liked it because the 332nd was flying the bomber escort missions that they wanted to fly. They traded

their P-40s for P-51s, and the P-51s became the standard plane not only for the 99th but also for the 332nd.

The P-51 was the best American fighter, probably the best Allied fighter in World War II. It was faster. It could fly farther. It was ideal for bomber escort. In fact, it'd been designed for bomber escort. It had been designed – the British wanted a good fighter that could stay with the bombers all the way to the target, and the bomber – the fighter escorts that had been designed before that lacked that ability. The P-51 could not only go all the way to the target with the bombers, but it could also fly as fast as and faster than a lot of the German fighter planes. But it was more maneuverable than some of the any 109s and FW-190s that it came in contact with.

The tails were painted red for identification and they mentioned that in the movie. But one thing that's a little bit of a misconception is the idea that they were the only fighter group that had tails painted a certain distinctive color. Every fighter group had tails painted a certain color. And the four P-51 fighter groups in the 15th Air Force each had its own tail color. The 31st fighter group, for example, also had red tails but they were striped red tails. The 332nd Fighter Group had solid red tails. The 52nd fighter group had yellow tails and the 325th fighter group in the same 15th Air Force had a checkerboard pattern tail—yellow and black.

If you look in the museum, if you look at the P-51 on display here at the museum, you'll see a P-51 from the 325th fighter group that has the yellow and black checkered tail. That is a significant P-51 because that's one of the groups with which the 332nd Fighter Group flew, same kind of aircraft in the same Air Force, 15th Air Force, one of the four P-51 groups in the 15th Air Force. The 332nd Fighter Group was the only one that had four squadrons. The other squadrons had three – the other groups had three squadrons each and that was more typical of fighter groups in World War II.

This is a good photograph of some of the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II by a plane. Of course, there was only one per plane but there were a lot of ground crew on the side. These are all pilots. They're gathered together talking about a mission. But I want you to know a certain things in this photograph. One of them is a steel planking, the pierced-steel planking they used and that's also depicted in the movie, the Red Tails movie. The pierced-steel planking was laid usually by Black engineers. Engineer Aviation Battalions put pierced-steel planking down not only for the Tuskegee Airmen but for other fighter groups all over the world. There were construction units, building bases, forward air bases all over the world and a lot of those construction personnel were Black and that's one reason I wanted to mention the pierced-steel plank.

You'll notice, too, on this P-51. They have a tank, a fuel tank that allowed the P-51 to fly farther. Originally, they had 75-gallon fuel tanks one on each wing, and eventually, they got 110-gallon fuel tanks, one on each wing, and that allowed them to go all the way to Berlin on the March 24th mission. They had 110 fuel tanks added to their wings as early as December of 1944. So the Berlin mission wasn't the first mission in which they had those larger fuel tanks.

Now, the bomber escort record I want to talk about, I already mentioned that 172 out of those 179 bomber escort missions were without losing an escorted bomber. So only seven missions lost in escorted bomber, and those were on specific dates when they encountered large numbers of enemy aircraft. There were more bombers than there were fighters to protect them. There were more enemy fighters than there were friendly fighters. So it's very understandable that at times some bombers were shot down even though they were escorted by the Tuskegee Airmen.

The total number that were lost were 27, but the average number lost by the other groups was 46. So it's an outstanding record and exemplary record. This might be the source of the "never lost the bomber" statement. This is an article in the Chicago Defender from March 24th 1945, the same day as the Berlin Mission. So ironically, it was the same day as the longest mission flown by the 15th Air Force and by the 332nd Fighter Group. It says, "332nd flies its 200 mission without loss." And let me tell you a little bit of background of this article. Two weeks before that, Roy Atlee [Phonetic], a reporter for Liberty Magazine published an article saying the 332nd Fighter Group had flown a hundred missions without losing a bomber. Well, technically, that was true because they had flown 138 missions by then, and more than a hundred of them were without bomber loss.

So somebody could misinterpret that article and say while they flew a hundred missions without losing a bomber, they might have flown a hundred missions and didn't lose a bomber. So they thought – maybe they thought they didn't lose a bomber, period, when actually they lost bombers from almost the second escort bomber mission. Bombers were shot down. So it wasn't true that they hadn't lost a bomber but they hadn't lost a bomber in over a hundred missions and that was in the Liberty Magazine article.

Two weeks later, another article appeared in the Chicago Defender. The reporter realized that by the end of February 1944 – I'm sorry 1945 – the 332nd Fighter Group had flown over 200 missions – 200 missions, I think, on February 28th. Not all of them were bomber escort missions, but it flown over 200 missions by March when this article was written. So the writer of the article probably jumped to the conclusion that if they hadn't lost any in a hundred missions and they flew 200 hundred missions, they hadn't lost a bomber, period, and I think that's where it started and it just spread that they hadn't lost a bomber when actually bombers had been shot down in the past. It wasn't really a story that originated with the Tuskegee Airmen, but it originated in the press.

The 24th March 1945 mission was the most important mission they ever flew is the mission for which they earned the Distinguished Unit Citation. I already mentioned Distinguished Unit Citations. I already said the 99th Fighter Squadron earned two Distinguished Unit Citations and that's true. But the 332nd Fighter Group wasn't over there yet. The 332nd Fighter Group earned one Distinguished Unit Citation for the Berlin Mission – outstanding mission. It was the longest mission the 15th Air Force ever flew. It was the longest mission that the Tuskegee Airmen ever flew. And on that mission, it's memorable because they shot down three German jets, and that's depicted in

the Red Tails, too. They show all three victories against German jets, and the victors were Roscoe Brown, Earl Lane and Charles Brantley. Each one of them shot down a German jet. Roscoe Brown is still active and he wrote the foreword to our book, and it's mentioned in the chronology that he shot down a German jet that day.

Now sometimes people have the misconception that it was the first time American pilots ever shot down German jets and that's not true because the 8th Air Force had already shot down – 8th Air Force pilots had already shot down German jets as early as 1944. And the 31st Fighter Group, a sister group of the 332nd Fighter Group in the 15th Air Force had already shot down a couple before March 24th. But that's not to say it wasn't an outstanding achievement. It just wasn't the first time that was ever done.

For the 99th Fighter Squadron, this was the third Distinguished Unit Citation. So if somebody should ask you, "How many Distinguished Unit Citations did the Tuskegee Airmen earned during World War II?" You'd have to say three because the Tuskegee Airmen organizations include not only the 99th but the 332nd. But if you ask, "How many Distinguished Unit Citations did the 332nd Fighter Group win in World War II?" You'd have to say one because the 99th had earned two of them before it was part of the 332nd.

This was the first time since 24 August 1944 that bombers escorted by Tuskegee Airmen were shot down by enemy aircraft. So they went seven months without losing a bomber and maybe one of the things they contributed to that story about never losing a bomber was a lot of the Tuskegee Airmen like William Holloman himself deployed over their dream that seven-month period, and they didn't remember losing any bombers. And the ones who had been there on the summer of 1944 might have been aware of those bomber losses. Some of them had gone back to the United States. They had finished their missions. They had been like Charles Dryden and returned to United States after they finished their combat duty. So there were seven months without losing a bomber.

The aerial victory credits of the Tuskegee Airmen, there are 112 of them, and this is something that Bill Holloman corrected on my original paper. Remember I told you I wrote a paper about the Tuskegee Airmen aerial victory credits? The original title of that paper was, "109 Victories." He brought to my attention that Joseph Elsberry on July 12th 1944 shot down three enemy aircraft and got a Distinguished Flying Cross for it. And I looked back at the records and I saw, "Well, yes, that's correct." And so I changed the title from 109 to 112 to include those three that Joseph Elsberry got that were not counted in the victory credit listings before that. So William Holloman is one of those that helped bring that to my attention. So they got 112 aerial victory credits.

You needed – you couldn't just come back after flying a combat mission and say, "I shot down an enemy aircraft" and get credit for it. You had to have gun camera film or a witness statement, and after you got the gun camera film and the witness statement, then the victory credit board would recognize the credit. And there would either be a victory credit board report or there'd be an order, 15th Air Force or 12 Air Force order, that said that you were awarded that credit.

There were no Aces and you may wonder why weren't there Aces among the Tuskegee Airmen? And one of the main reasons there were no aces is because they deployed so late. They deployed much later than the other fighter groups. If you look at the seven fighter groups in the 15th Air Force, the 332nd Fighter Group was the last one to go over there. And so they had less opportunity to shoot down Germany aircraft. Another reason is because by that time in the war, there were fewer German aircraft to shoot down. So there were no Aces.

Three of the Tuskegee Airmen shot down four enemy aircraft and one of them was Lee Acher. One of them was Joseph Elsberry I told you about and one of them was Edward Toppins. The 332nd Fighter Group, as I said, didn't deploy until 1944, which was much later than a lot of other fighter groups that were already over there scoring victories.

Now this is the group that's most ignored. If you ask people about the Tuskegee Airmen, you usually hear, "Well, yeah, they were the fighter pilots in World War II that escorted the bombers." But the 477th Bombardment Group is sometimes ignored. It was – the members of that group were just as much Tuskegee Airmen as anybody else because they were trained – the pilots were trained at Tuskegee. It was more challenging in a way than the fighter pilots, because the fighter pilot was just in-charge of his plane and his own conduct. The bomber crew pilots were in-charge of a crew and they had a bombardier and a navigator and gunners and radio operators and other men under them. So it took longer to train bomber pilots and bomber crews than it did fighter pilots. That's one reason why the 477th didn't enter combat.

Another reason is the 477th Bombardment Group didn't even start. It wasn't activated until the 332nd deployed. Remember, the 332nd Fighter Group had been at Selfridge Field Michigan? When it deployed, Selfridge Field was empty, and that's when they started the 477th Bombardment Group. It was the beginning of 1944. So that's another reason why the 477th Bombardment Group never deployed overseas. It flew B-25 bombers, the same kind of bombers that Jimmy Doolittle had used in the raid on Tokyo. You know, the famous Doolittle Raid on Tokyo from the aircraft carrier Hornet.

The one reason the 477th Bombardment Group never deployed overseas, never entered combat was because they were moved from base to base, and I want to tell you a little bit more about that. There was an incident, a famous incident at Freeman Field. The 332nd Fighter Group started at Selfridge Field and then it moved to Godman Field and then it moved to Freeman Field, which they thought was a blessing at first, because Freeman Field was a large airbase. It was a much larger airbase than where they had been, bigger than Godman, bigger than Selfridge.

And so when they moved to Freeman Field, they thought, "This is a bigger base. We'll have a lot more room for all the squadrons and all the training we need." Unfortunately, the commander of the 477th Group decided that the base was big enough for two officers club. One of them for the Black pilots, and one of them for the White trainers. And so he tried to establish segregated officers clubs at Freeman Field.

Now, the members, several members of the 477th, really over a hundred members of the 477th Bombardment Group were not going to stand for that. They tried to desegregate the officers club that had been branded the White officers club, and they tried to desegregate that, and several of them were arrested. Well, the base commander decided, "Well, I'm going to drop the charges on them. I'll just make sure all the 477th Bombardment Group members sign a paper saying that they agree this is the policy." Now, the policy was carefully worded. It didn't say, "They'll be one officers club for Blacks and one officers club for Whites." It said "there'll be one officers club for trainers and one for trainees," but it was just a veil disguise for segregation. And the pilots and the officers of the 477th Bombardment Group, not just pilots but navigators and bombardiers refused to sign the statement and it was disobeying an order of their base commander. And so, they were arrested, 101 of them were arrested.

Well, eventually, all 101 were exonerated while there was one that charges were maintained for trying to enter the officers club, and that was another case. But he was eventually exonerated, too. But all the Tuskegee Airmen who protested at Freeman Field were eventually exonerated because the Army knew that it had a policy. If you were an officer at an Army base, you had the right to go to its officers club, and there was no mention of a separate officers club for Blacks and Whites, and separate officers club for trainees or trainers.

So the "Freeman Field Mutiny" is an important incident in the history of the Tuskegee Airmen, but also in civil rights history, because this was a case where there was a protest against segregation that ultimately succeeded and eventually, the Armed Forces were desegregated, not just Freeman Field.

Benjamin Davis returned from Europe at the end of the war in Europe and he became Commander of the 477th Bombardment Group. The guy that had started the separate officers club policy Robert Selway, was replaced by Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., and he had been the Commander of the 99th, the Commander of the 332nd, and now he was the Commander of the 477th. At the same time that he came over, he brought the 99th Fighter Squadron with him. It was assigned to the 477th Bombardment Group, and now that the bombardment group had a fighter squadron and bombardment squadrons, it was no longer just a bombardment group or just a fighter group. It was a composite group. So it was re-designated as a composite group, 477th Composite Group.

After World War II, the 332nd Fighter Group was inactivated. The 477th Composite Group was moved to Lockbourne and it stayed at Lockbourne until about 1947 and it was inactivated. The 332nd Fighter Group – this is confusing I know, but the 332nd Fighter Group was activated again and put at Lockbourne in place of the 477th. And in 1949, its last year of existence, there was a gunnery competition at Las Vegas and it was testing different groups for how good they were at gunnery and the 332nd Fighter Group won the propeller aircraft division. There were two divisions—one for propeller aircraft, one for jet aircraft. They won the propeller aircraft division and the trophy that they won is on display here at the museum. If you go through the World War II section, I think it's right

behind the B-29. You'll see a picture of the – you'll see the actual trophy that they won in 1949.

Unfortunately, when the Air Force integrated, instead of assigning White personnel to the 332nd Fighter Group, the 332nd Fighter Group was inactivated, and its personnel were assigned to White groups. So maybe it should have been the other way around. Maybe White personnel should've been assigned to the 332nd instead of the 332nd inactivated. But it was inactivated in 1949 and the Black pilots were reassigned to formerly all-White organizations. The Air Force became integrated, and the Tuskegee Airmen had something to do with that.

One thing I need to add though, the 332nd you may wonder, what is it today? The 332nd Fighter Group of World War II is still around. It's the 332nd Expeditionary Operations Group. And the reason it has the emblem of the 332nd Fighter Group in World War II is because it's the same group. It just has been re-designated and activated again. And I work with Lineage and Honors History of Air Force Organization. You know, sometimes, an organization can be activated then inactivated and re-designated, but it keeps its same emblem and it keeps its same honors. It keeps its same heritage. So it's the same organization, and it's still around.

After the war, Benjamin O. Davis Jr. became the first Black general in the Air Force but not the first four-star Black General. That was "Chappy" James. Eventually, Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. was given a four-star, honorary star, by President Clinton, I think, in 1997 not long before he died. Charles McGee, who I've known over the years going to the Tuskegee Airmen National Conventions and also at Maxwell Air Force Base where he's come to do research and to speak, served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, like "Chappy" James but he flew more combat missions than any other Air Force pilot – Charles McGee, 409 missions.

President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981 in 1948, which didn't say desegregation or integration in the wording. But because of the wording, it said there will be racial equality and there will be the same opportunities for all regardless of race. It mandated all the services to change their regulations so that there would be integration in the services, and eventually, the Air Force did that in 1949, the first of the military services to do that. So the Executive Order came about 1948. The Air Force implemented the executive order in 1949.

This is a picture of General Daniel "Chappy" James, the first Black four-star general. I'm getting beyond my notes here. Okay. I'm sorry. I'm going the wrong way. Okay. I wanted to say a few words about the misconceptions. You know I already mentioned some of them already and I won't go into those again. But one of the most important misconceptions was that misconception of inferiority. It was a misconception that had developed. You know, it had been long been in American history. It was in the Army War College study of 1925 that said that Blacks were inferior and there was not much evidence of that – not enough evidence of that at all, and the Tuskegee Airmen disproved that report.

In 1943, one of the leaders of one of the group to which the 99th Fighter Squadron was attached, the 33rd Fighter Group was under William Momyer. And William Momyer recommended that the 99th be taken out of combat because he claimed it hadn't fought as well as the other P-40 squadrons in that theater. You'll see a little reference to that in Red Tails. And one of the reasons why Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. went back was to get command of the 332nd Fighter Group, but he also testified to a committee in Washington about the performance of the 99th Fighter Squadron in combat. So there's a basis for that in Red Tails.

The war department decided to compare, to do a study, comparing the 99th Fighter Squadron with the other P-40 squadrons in the theater, Mediterranean Theater, and that study came out in March of 1944. It had been conducted for months and they compared all the statistics about the 99th Fighter Squadron and the other P-40 squadrons in the Mediterranean Theater and concluded that the 99th was flying just as well as the other P-40 squadrons with to which it fought. So there was no basis to Momyer's call for them to be taken out of combat.

The 332nd Fighter Group lost fewer bombers than the average fighter group in the 15th Air Force, and the 332nd Fighter Group, if you compare aerial victories – you know, in the movie, if you go to Red Tails, you almost get the idea that, well, they either were protecting the bombers or they were shooting down enemy aircraft. They weren't doing both. They would either get a lot of victory credits or they would protect a lot of bombers. But when you look at the victory credits of the Tuskegee Airmen, they're not at the bottom of the list. If you compare the seven fighter groups in the 15th Air Force, there were two fighter groups that had fewer aerial victories than the 332nd. So they weren't at the bottom of the list for aerial victories either.

And I think the other misconceptions I've already covered. Oh, there's a scene in the Red Tails movie and you might have seen the movie and seen this, where they attacked a German destroyer. Well, they did attack a German destroyer, but in the movie, it looks like it's one P-51 pilot and a Red Tail P-51, who's attacking a German destroyer. Actually, it was eight Tuskegee Airmen flying P-47s, not P-51s. They didn't have the P-51s yet. So that's a little bit taking liberties. But the movie doesn't claim to be a documentary. It says, "This is inspired by true events." It's not a documentary like Double Victory.

One other difference in the movie that I wanted to mention is the idea that they were doing something new by sticking with the bombers. You know there were two-bomber escort policies that they mentioned in the movie. One of them is the fighter pilot stuck with the bombers and protected them against enemy aircraft and weren't lured off to dogfights. The other policy was that they would go after the enemy fighters and try to shoot down as many enemy fighters as they could.

There were two policies, but the 332nd Fighter Group wasn't the first group to implement "stick with the bombers." The original policy was Ira Eaker's in the 8th Air Force. When

he was at the 8th Air Force in England, the policy was to stick with the bombers. When Jimmy Doolittle replaced Eaker as Commander of the 8th Air Force, he went into the office of the 8th Fighter Command, the leader, the commander of the 8th Fighter Command, Bill Kepner – William Kepner, and he saw a sign on the wall – this is early 1944, January 1944 – he saw a sign on the wall that said” the first duty of the 8th Fighter Command is to bring the bombers back safely.” Jimmy Doolittle said, "Take that sign down." He said, "That's not going to be the policy. The policy of the 8th Fighter Command is to shoot down German fighters."

And so, he changed the policy. It was – the new policy wasn't to stick with the bombers. The new policy was to go after the fighters and that was in the 8th Air Force. What I think happened was – and this is speculation. I don't pretend that I've seen documentation of this – Ira Eaker, when he was replaced by Doolittle as Commander of the 8th Air Force, went to the Mediterranean. He became commander of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, and that was over the 15th Air Force. So Eaker's policy was to stick with the bombers. I think he carried the policy with him.

And then when the 332nd deployed over there and Benjamin O. Davis met Eaker, and he did meet Eaker and speak with him about the bomber escort policy, I think that Ira Eaker said, "Stick with the bombers." And Benjamin O. Davis Jr. told his squadrons "Stick with the bombers" and they stuck with the bombers. And that was not a new policy. It was Eaker's old policy with the 8th Air Force.

So in conclusion, the original documents of the Tuskegee Airmen are at the Air Force Historical Research Agency. If you ever write a book about the Tuskegee Airmen, please come visit us and look at those documents. And the second thing is the three authors – I'm not the only author of that book that you might want to get a copy of. The other authors are Joseph Caver and Jerome Ennels, and I want to give them credit because it's not just a one-man book. It's a three-man book.

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