



# Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.

## Buford A. Johnson Chapter

### October, 2016

#### October Meeting

Our October meeting will take place on Saturday, October 8<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM sharp. We will meet at Altura Credit Union. Requests are beginning to come in for school outreach in November. We will update you on our scholarship application status. Please try to be present.

#### Lonely Eagles Chapter



Two DOTAs, Lt. Colonel Leo Gray and Wilbur Gaston Mason have joined the Lonely Eagles Chapter. Lt. Col. Gray began training after high school in 1942 at Tuskegee Army Airfield. The following year, he became an active duty pilot. He was stationed in Italy where he flew 15 combat missions as a pilot with the 100<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group. He flew the P-51 Mustang and logged 750 flight hours. After the war, Lt. Col. Gray earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in agricultural economics and became an executive with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Mason was born and raised in Tuskegee, Alabama. He worked at the Tuskegee Army Air Field in the area of supply. He is an example of those civilians who qualify as DOTAs because of their work in the Tuskegee Experience. He served first as a storekeeper where he received and stored Air Force property. He then became an inspector in base supply to inspect and identify Air Force property according to the manuals, rules and regulations. He later studied Industrial Arts and Electrical Engineering at Tuskegee Institute and moved to Detroit as an electrician. He retired in 1985 to Atlanta Georgia.

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#### Condolences



Mrs. Elizabeth Richards and son Bill

Our condolences, prayers, and thoughts go out to our Merchandising Officer William Richards and his family. His mother, Mrs. Elizabeth A. Richards, 92, passed away on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Mrs. Richards was a lifelong resident of Dayton, Ohio and was a member of St. Margaret's Episcopal Church. Miss Betty was outspoken and was the life of any party she attended. She loved her Long Island Iced Tea. She spent most of her career working at Miami Valley Hospital as a nurse. She leaves behind three children: son William J. Richards, Jr., Barbara A. Bass, and Ronald E. Richards as well as six grandsons and seven great-grandchildren. Please keep the family in your thoughts and prayers.

(Lonely Eagles, continued from page 1)



**Mr. Mason and Lt. Col. Gray**

### **Interesting Tuskegee Experience Facts**



**Chief Justice Thurgood Marshall**

Late Chief Justice Thurgood Marshall got his start by defending Tuskegee bomber trainees. In 1944, the 477<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group was formed. Its purpose was to extend the Tuskegee Experiment by allowing black aviators to serve on bomber crews. The idea was to send pilots, many of whom were veterans of the original Tuskegee fighter group back to the states to be trained on B-25 bombers. While in Indiana, 100 black officers were arrested and charged with mutiny for entering an all-white officers' club. A young lawyer named Thurgood Marshall represented the 100 black officers who had been arrested. The men were released, however one was later convicted of violent conduct and fined.

*From "History in the Headlines."*

### **Mutiny at Freeman Field**



Officers from the 477<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group prepare to board planes in 1945 at Freeman Field. They were transferred to Godman Field, Kentucky.

The 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group was the first all-black fighter squadron deployed from Tuskegee Army Air Base in 1943. The 477<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group was the first and only black bomber group created during World War II. It was never to see combat.

After being stationed in Indiana, officers of the 477<sup>th</sup> tried to integrate an all-white officers' club. Even though military regulations said that any officers' club was open to any officer, Freeman Field chose to have two clubs, one for "supervisors" (white), and the other for "trainees" (black).

Lt. Roger "Bill" Terry and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Coleman Young planned to send black officers into the club three at a time. As they tried to enter, they were arrested. Terry and Young continued to send in more officers. In all, 103 black officers were arrested that night, including Terry and Young. Only three were court martialed. Lt. Marsden A. Thompson and Lt. Shirley R. Clinton were acquitted. Terry was acquitted of the main charge, but was later convicted of "jostling" and officer. His fine was \$150. He was reduced in rank and was dishonorably discharged from the Army. The 477<sup>th</sup> was moved to Kentucky.

Terry became a lawyer and Young served as Detroit's first black mayor. In 1995, 50 years after the conviction, Mr. Terry was pardoned by the Army, his rank was restored, and his \$150 was returned. Mr. Terry said, "It

told me that after 50 years, after 70 years, after 100 years, if you're right, you can be vindicated because we're a nation of laws."

The Mutiny at Freeman Field is considered an important step toward the integration of the military. The order to integrate the military was given on July 26, 1948. The 477<sup>th</sup> was inactivated on July 1, 1947.

On August 12, 1995, the Air Force announced the vindication of the black officers who had been arrested at Freeman Field. Letters of reprimand were removed from the permanent military records of those who requested this action. Roger C. Terry was exonerated.

On October 1, 2007, the 477<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group was renamed the 477<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group and was reactivated as the first Air Force Reserve unit to fly, maintain, and support the F-22A Raptor. It is based at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska.



*Source: CAF Redtail Squadron*

### **Historical Information is Important**

Now that the school year has begun, we will be called on to represent the Tuskegee Airmen and various history days as well as speaking engagements. It is important that we get it right if we are to keep the memory of these amazing men and women alive. These historical narratives will be included in each newsletter so that we may be accurate when we share the story of the Tuskegee Experience.