

NEWSLETTER OF THE **DETROIT CHAPTER** OF
THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN INCORPORATED

December
2016

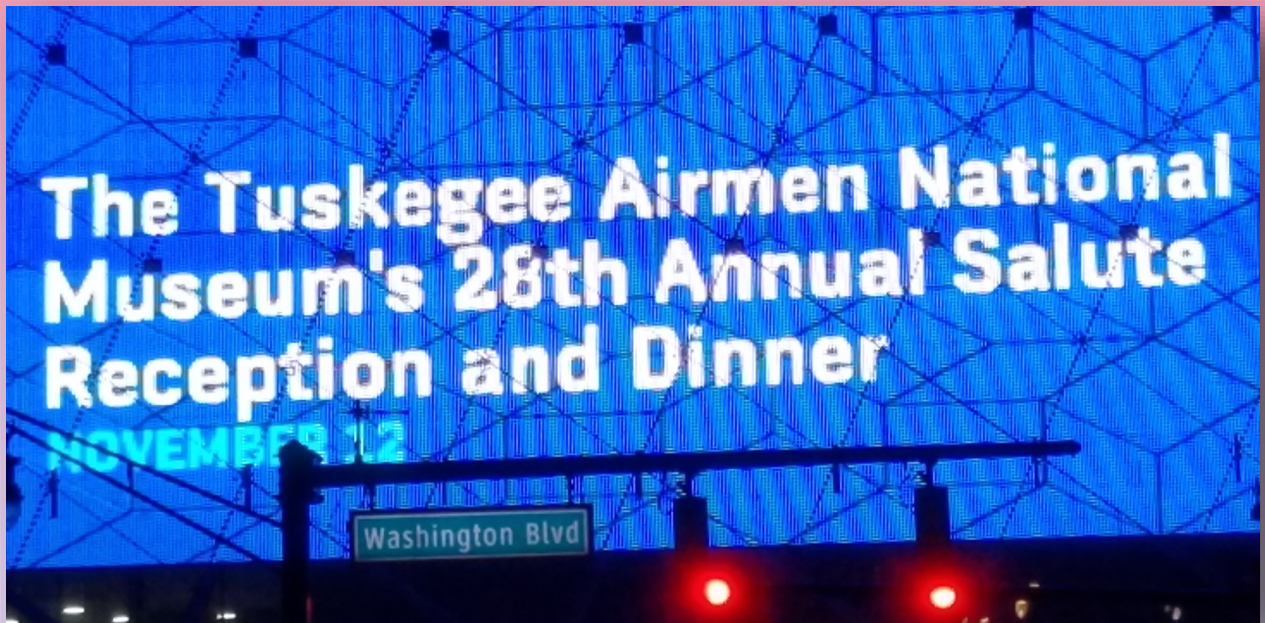


Hawk's Cry II



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ON THE COVER: Image By Larry Sargent

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THE PRESIDENTS' PAGE



THE NEXT TWO CHAPTER MEETINGS

Thursday, 8 December 2016 and 12 January 2017 @ 1900 hours (7:00 p.m.)

Please Arrive between 6:30 & 6:45pm-before doors are locked.

At 613 Abbott in Downtown Detroit (3rd and Abbott)

REMEMBER: CHAPTER MEETINGS ARE ALWAYS THE 2ND THURSDAY OF THE MONTH

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS

Please Wear Tuskegee Airmen Marked Clothing to Meetings to Show Uniformity

Greetings All,

Merry Christmas

Our Prayer is that this Newsletter finds you in good health and looking forward to the NEW YEAR! Our finale this year is our Annual Pot Luck Dinner, and brief meeting. It appears that we shall have quite a few guests, especially our Women's Auxiliary Chapter. We welcome them along with our other guests.

During November we were very busy. The 28th Annual Dinner was a rousing success. Lieutenant General Stayce D. Harris, who is the first African American Three Star General in the Air Force, gave the Keynote Address, she was fantastic and shared her personal relationship with The Tuskegee Airmen.

Our own, Lt. Col. Alexander Jefferson received "The Legion of Honor medal, which was presented to him by The Honorary Consul General De France, Mr. Pascale Furlong during the museum dinner. The day before, Consul General Vincent Floreani, met Lt. Jefferson and congratulated him in Southfield.

The medal was established by Napoleon in 1802. Another highlight of the dinner was that a bomber pilot from WWII from Ohio was present from the 463rd Bomber Group, Captain Popovich, who had always wanted to meet one of the Original Tuskegee Airmen attended with his family and his Grand-son-in-law presented Lt. Jefferson with a very special Plaque celebrating his service.

Another significant event happened in Grand Rapids where LTC. Washington Ross and Sgt. Frederick Henry were Grand Marshalls at the Veterans Day event. They were able to tour The Amway facility along with a special dinner and presentation. Unfortunately, Mrs. Henry fell ill at the event.



Remember it is better to give than to receive.
Leadership training prior to our April meeting.

The Theme is

"And Stepping into it, doing our part"

Special Showing of Luft Gangster at The Canton Library on February 7, 2017 at 6:30 PM. The library is located on Canton Center Road south of Cherry Hill

- Detroit River Days is scheduled for June 23-25, 2017
- Special events will happen with Selfridge the weekend of May 19, 2017
- Selfridge Air Show will be held August 19-20, 2017 (75th Anniversary)
- The Willow Run "Thunder Over Michigan" Air show is scheduled for September 2-4, 2017. It will feature the Blue Angels .

Lastly, we would like to extend our prayers to DOTA Fred Henry and his family for the loss of his wife, Naomi Henry, a very special lady. Fred and Naomi were married over 60 years and have several children.

Be Blessed,

Miguel Thornton

President

Detroit Chapter

Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.

The Hawk's Cry II



LOCAL HAPPENINGS

SVOU honors Tuskegee Airman from Michigan

[Laurel Kraus](#), Staff Reporter November 19, 2016

The Student Veterans of Oakland University (SVOU) honored [Tuskegee Airman Lt. Col. Alexander Jefferson](#) on Nov. 22 through a screening of the award-winning documentary "[The Luft Gangster: Memoirs of a Second Class Hero](#)." Born and raised in Detroit, Jefferson is only seven Tuskegee Airmen (in the Detroit chapter) still alive today. The event took place on his 95th birthday. "Happy birthday to me . . ." Jefferson sang when a group of attendees asked him about it. SVOU President Ivan Rose spoke about how rare it is to have the chance to experience history before introducing Mike Rott, producer and director of "The Luft Gangster," and Rott's father, Sheldon Rott, who was also co-producer and music director of the film. "The way this all came about, I met a friend about 3 1/2 years ago now, and he said, 'The organization I'm in is sponsoring a lecture and we're having a Tuskegee Airman speak,'" Sheldon Rott said. "When I had the opportunity to hear this lecture, it was Lt. Col. Jefferson, and it was overwhelming. Mike, who had been with Apple Company, opened his own studio at that time. I said, 'Mike, we have to do something.'" Starting just a few minutes after 6:30 p.m., the documentary opened with the definition of "luft gangster." "'Luft' means 'air,'" Jefferson's voiceover played through the speakers. "The Germans called American fighter pilots 'Luft Gangsters.' 'Air gangsters,' from a German point of view. To us, we were simply doing our job." The documentary went on to recount the racial hardships of Jefferson's life, long before he even made it to the military. Then, through firsthand accounts, including Jefferson's, the film described what it was like to be a part of the first African American aviators in the United States Armed Forces. The documentary even delved into Jefferson's time in a German prison camp and what he experienced there. Afterward, when an audience member asked Jefferson about the comparison between slavery and the Holocaust he stated, "There is no comparison." The audience erupted in a standing ovation for Jefferson after the film ended. He was then handed a microphone and answered audience questions for over 20 minutes. Representatives from [Team Rubicon](#) and Pontiac Vet Center were in attendance, as well as Nick Star from the [VFW National Home for Children](#), who accepted monetary donations and Christmas gifts for the children of veterans and active-duty military families. At the end of the event, a birthday cake was brought out for Jefferson and the audience was invited to share.

2016 Tuskegee Airmen Documentary - OFFICIALLY RELEASED!

BUY NOW on DVD & BluRay:

"THE LUFT GANGSTER: MEMOIRS OF A SECOND CLASS HERO"

THE COMPLETED FEATURE LENGTH VERSION OF THIS AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY IS NOW RELEASED HONORING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LEGENDARY TUSKEGEE AIRMEN (the "RED TAILS")

This Inspirational Film Starring Lt. Col. Alexander Jefferson is A MUST HAVE for Now and for Future Generations.



ORDER NOW AT:
WWW.LUFTGANGSTERMOVIE.COM

*"The film itself is a loving, reverent tribute to an honorable man, worthy of being honored."
★★★★ - Tom Santilli, Examiner.com*

This award-winning documentary was shown pre-released on a T-38 aircraft worldwide to celebrate diversity for Black History Month 2016

American Airlines

France awards 5 Metro Detroit WWII vets with high honor

Charles E. Ramirez, The Detroit News 8:18 p.m. EST November 11, 2016
(Photo: Daniel Mears / Detroit News)



Southfield — **Alexander Jefferson** vividly remembers being shot down over France during World War II when he was a pilot with the 332nd Tuskegee Airmen Red Tail Squadron. “I was at about 200 feet when a shell came through the floor,” the retired lieutenant colonel said of the Aug. 12, 1944, event. “When I bailed out, I landed in the middle of a group of Germans. They were surprised to see me. “One guy even saluted me when he saw the little gold bar on my collar.” Jefferson, 94, who was born in Detroit, made the remarks during a special ceremony held at the Shriners’

Silver Gardens Event Center where he and four other Metro Detroit World War II veterans were honored on Veterans Day by France’s Consul General for the Midwest. *(Jefferson was presented his award during museum dinner)* The other veterans honored were:

- Walter Bala, 93, of Southfield served with the U.S. 8th Air Force. He served in northern France, Ardennes and Rhineland.
- John Clark, 93, of Ann Arbor served with the 100th Bomb Group, U.S. 8th Air Force, as a co-pilot on B-24 bombers. He completed 32 missions over Germany and flew missions in Europe.
- Mario Gizzi, 96, of Allen Park served with the 13th infantry regiment of the 8th Division. He served in Normandy, northern France, Rhineland and central Europe.
- Robert Haffner, 91, of St. Clair Shores served with the 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion with the 82nd Airborne Division. Haffner served in Normandy, France, Ardennes, Rhineland, Germany, and central Europe.



Knight of the Legion of Honor Medal. (Photo: Daniel Mears / Detroit News)

Vincent Floreani, French Consul General for the Midwest, presented four of the vets with France’s Knight of the Legion of Honor Medal. Created by Napoleon Bonaparte, the medal is the highest honor the country bestows on people who have carried out actions of great value to the nation, Floreani said. The consul said he will present Jefferson with his medal Saturday during a ceremony at the Tuskegee Airmen National Museum in Detroit. Floreani awarded the vets the medals for their role in helping liberate the European nation from Nazi occupation. “Thanks to men like you, France has lived in peace for several decades,” he said. “Every person in France has a special place in their heart for you.” Floreani was joined by U.S. Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township. Peters told the vets how his mother was a teen in France during World War II. “Both the American people and the people of France are truly grateful for everything you have done for our two nations,” Peters said. Thank you for your patriotism, your sacrifice and your willingness to

liberate a country that was not your own. Your service and dedication to defending the American ideals of liberty, equality and justice for all will never be forgotten.” The senator also passed along his mother’s gratitude to the veterans. After getting his medal, Clark said to the consul: “Merci beaucoup! Vie le France! (Thank you very much! Long live France!)” America has about 21 million military veterans and more than 600,000 live in Michigan, according to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. The country has about 695,000 World War II veterans and Michigan has 37,200 veterans who served during that war, according to the VA. Jefferson thanked the consul and the people of France for the medal, but he said it wasn’t just for him. “I simply wish to remember all of the guys out of my squadron, out of my group, who died in Germany and France,” he said. “It’s a great honor, but I think this medal I’m about to receive tomorrow, they deserve.” cramirez@detroitnews.com



World War II veterans Mario Gizzi, receives the Knight of the Legion of Honor Medal from the Consul General of France for the Midwest Vincent Floreani. (Photo: Daniel Mears / Detroit News)

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

Our P-51C Mustang is back in the air!

By Bill Shepard

It has been a long eight months, but I am excited to say that the CAF Red Tail Squadron's P-51C Mustang *Tuskegee Airmen* has returned to the skies! Our team recently completed a successful test flight of the aircraft after undergoing careful and meticulous repair due to severe damage sustained last February. The team responsible for its care logged over 3,000 hours, and did so with respect and reverence for the plane and what it symbolizes. Getting this amazing aircraft airworthy again gets us back on the air show circuit and at events around the country... and that means that we can return to the mission at hand to honor the Tuskegee Airmen with this awe-inspiring vintage fighter. This month saw us return to flight, but December also marks the 75th anniversary of the attacks on Pearl Harbor. I can't help but think back to that time and what it must have been like for the men and women who would become known as the Tuskegee Airmen. To hear the news out of Hawaii that day must have been shattering. To want to fly and fight for your country but told you were inept because of your complexion? Absurd. I believe the lessons of the Tuskegee Airmen should be remembered to honor their legacy, but also inspire each one of us to rise above our own obstacles. The most powerful inoculation against apathy, and repeating past mistakes, is empathy and remembrance. Each year, Pearl Harbor Day is an opportunity to do that. With two full restorations and one major repair under its belt, we like to think that our P-51C Mustang has been able to rise above some pretty major hurdles itself over the years. The aircraft continues to fly, educate and inspire, and we hope to be able to do so for a very long time. With our aircraft airworthy once again, the CAF Red Tail Squadron will press on to honor the history and legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and bring this important message to as many people as possible. Inspire for higher!



Warm temps, big crowds at Holiday tree lighting at Campus Martius

By: Josh Landon

UPDATED: NOV 18 2016 11:24PM EST

A beautiful warm day in Metro Detroit got a lot of people into the Holiday Spirit. It felt more like Spring in the middle of November, perfect timing for the tree lighting at Campus Martius. "I'm having a ball. I'm here with my two grand boys and we're having an excellent time," said Sheila Bryan. Warm temps, big crowds at Holiday tree lighting at Campus Martius. "It looks amazing," Chris Bailey said. "The lights are fantastic. We've been coming down for a number of years."



FOX 2 met people from all walks of life at the tree lighting. Terrence Cantrell, part of the security team, doesn't take moments like this for granted. He battled cancer for seven years. "I live life to the fullest, until the wheels fall off," he said. **Alex-**

ander Jefferson, a Tuskegee Airman, born and raised in Detroit reflected on childhood memories during the holiday season. An honorable 95 year old man who looks about 20 years younger. "Granted a lot more work is needed," Jefferson said. "But do you feel the good old days possibly coming back. Possibly. Let's face it. Things have improved 100 percent. Yes indeed, and they're going to get better. Look forward to it." Some also came for their own special day. Those same thoughts echoed by a new Detroit resident who just moved from North Carolina. He says the vibe is good and everyone is happy.

FOX 2: "And the fact it was almost 70 degrees in Detroit today. How about that? In the middle of November?" "That's wonderful, God send the angels," said Porteaux Islas. "And it's all for us." Also, a big announcement at Friday's tree lighting. Figure skating Harlem is now also figure skating Detroit. It's a 20-year youth development program that also embodies self-esteem and fitness. "We're the first city picked for the expansion of this program," said Pat Tallet, Michigan Women's Foundation. Everyone jammed the night away waiting for the tree to light up. Any and every one can make their way to campus Martius and enjoy the wonderful display this holiday season. <http://www.fox2detroit.com/news/local-news/218527840-story>



Images from the Museum Dinner

The Hawk's Cry II



All Pictures by John Stewart

LOCAL HAPPENINGS



The Hawk's Cry II



LOCAL HAPPENINGS



The Hawk's Cry II



LOCAL HAPPENINGS



The Hawk's Cry II



Willie Rogers, oldest Tuskegee Airman, dies at 101

Associated Press 11:54 a.m. EST November 21, 2016

St. Petersburg, Fla. — Willie Rogers, the oldest surviving member of the original Tuskegee Airmen, has died at the age of 101. Rogers died Friday evening, said Rev. Kenny Irby, the pastor at the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. He lived in a senior apartment complex near the church, and walked the short distance to worship every Sunday, up until three weeks before his death. “He was a super



loving man who cared deeply about his community and his family,” said Irby. “Humble at the highest level.” Rogers was drafted into the army in 1942 and was part of the 100th Air Engineer Squad. Rogers also served with the Red Tail Angels. He was wounded in action, shot in the stomach and leg by German soldiers, during a mission in Italy in January 1943. Irby said Rogers was a “passionate oral historian,” but he didn’t like to fuss about his own bravery. In 2007, the Tuskegee Airmen were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the nation’s highest civilian honor. President George W. Bush saluted the 300 surviving airmen at a ceremony in the Capitol, where he apologized for “all the unreturned salutes and unforgivable indignities” they had endured. But Mr. Rogers was not there, and neither were his children. According to the Tampa Bay Times, they weren’t even aware their father was part of the first African-American military aviation squadron in the history of the U.S. Armed

Forces. They knew he had served in World War II, but he did not reveal that portion of the story until 2012. Part of the reason for that silence, he’d tell his family, was because his work was on the ground in logistics and administration, not in the sky where the heroics took place. Born in Apalachicola in 1915, he moved to St. Petersburg after the war and established Rogers Radio Sales and Services, selling and repairing small appliances. Irby said that Rogers was a man of great faith. “All the things he went through, he never portrayed a negative spirit about any of it,” said Irby. “He was glad to be alive and to have been given another opportuni-



ty to serve.”

Tuskegee Airman James B. Williams dies at age 97

By Lauren Villagran | Albuquerque Journal, N.M. | Published: November 26, 2016



LAS CRUCES, N.M. (Tribune News Service) – One of the famed Tuskegee Airmen who supported the Allied victory in World War II, New Mexico native Dr. James B. Williams, died Wednesday at age 97. Williams was one of the few remaining survivors who served in the U.S. Army Air Forces program that trained African-Americans for the war effort – a pioneering group that would play a key role in the desegregation of the military. Before 1940, African-Americans were barred from flying for the U.S. military, according to Tuskegee Airmen Inc., a national organization with chapters in New Mexico that supports the airmen's legacy. Civil rights groups lobbied against that ban, leading to the formation of an all-African-American pursuit squadron based in Tuskegee, Ala., in 1941. From 1942 through 1946, 994 pilots received their wings at Tuskegee. Born to

Jasper and Clara Belle Williams – the first black woman to graduate from what is now New Mexico State University – Williams was studying medicine when he joined the military in 1942. He was selected to attend the Medical Administrative Officers Candidate School at Camp Pickett, Va., but he wanted to become a pilot and asked for transfer to the Army Air Forces, according to TheHistoryMakers.com, an online collection of African-American oral histories. He received basic training as an aviation cadet at Boca Raton Club, Fla., and technical training at Yale University, where he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Air Forces. Williams served as an engineering officer in the 99th Fighter Squadron. He did not see combat. In 1942, Williams was among the more than 100 black officers who tried to integrate a whites-only officers' club at Freeman Field in Indiana. They were arrested, but all were eventually exonerated and their military records cleared. The incident became a bellwether for the end of segregation in the military in 1945. Williams' daughter Brenda Payton Jones recalled hearing the story about Freeman Field and feeling "just so incredibly proud." Williams told his superiors: "If I can't go into the officers' club, then I shouldn't be an officer," Payton Jones said. "That was the way we heard it growing up. "When I thought of a young man, 21, standing up on his own for what he knew was right" After his military service, Williams obtained a bachelor's degree in chemistry from NMSU and earned his M.D. from Creighton University School of Medicine. He founded the Williams Medical Clinic in Chicago with two brothers, practiced as a general surgeon and eventually retired in Las Cruces. In 2007, Williams and other Tuskegee Airmen won the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor bestowed by Congress. He is survived by his wife, Willeen; daughter Brenda Payton Jones, a journalist in Oakland, Calif.; and son Dr. James B. Williams II, a Minneapolis surgeon.

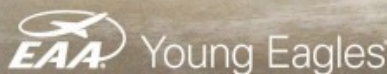
Why I Fly Young Eagles

"My neighbor, Robert Shurney, a NASA engineer, got a friend of his to take me flying in his Cessna 172 when I was 12 years old. After that flight I spent many hours building airplanes and rockets. I eventually earned a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering, and later in life I dedicated myself to educating other underrepresented youth to careers in aviation."

"I started EAA Chapter 1351 around the turn of the century with the sole purpose of doing Young Eagles rallies. Several of the Young Eagles I flew went on to pursue careers in aviation, and several are in the Tuskegee Airmen Flight Academy, an aviation program run by the Tuskegee Airmen National Museum, where a dedicated student can earn a pilot certificate."

> Brian Smith, Ph.D., EAA 495180

President and founder of EAA Chapter 1351 in Detroit, Michigan. More than 750 Young Eagles flown to date.



Visit YoungEagles.org/volunteers
to become a Young Eagles volunteer pilot.

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Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program

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Original Tuskegee Airmen Signed Certificates of Appreciation

Refreshed with new background and now with the
signatures of 12 Detroit Chapter DOTA's.

The certificates come in six (6) different ribbon color
combinations;

- Yellow text on Black background
- Black on Yellow
- Yellow on Red
- Red on Yellow
- Yellow on Blue
- Blue on Yellow
- Green on White and
- White on Green

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ATTENTION ALL CHAPTER MEMBERS: To ensure we have adequate coverage of local activities, please get your local and recent Tuskegee Airmen related news stories to the editor ASAP. Contact info inside

