

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

January  
2017



# ***Hawk's***



# ***Cry II***

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**TAIDETNewsletter@Comcast.Net**

CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF



WILLIAM "BILL" HORTON THOMPSON, SR.  
March 12, 1919 December 24, 2016

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## CENTRAL REGION

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## SITES OF INTEREST

*Simply SELECT The Link*

[National Organization](#)  
[TA National Museum](#)  
[TA National Historic Site](#)

**ON THE COVER: Image By Larry Sargent**

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# THE PRESIDENTS' PAGE



## THE NEXT TWO CHAPTER MEETINGS

**Thursday, 12 January 2017 and 9 February 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**

## HAPPY NEW YEAR 2017

Greetings to you all! Since we have closed the door on 2016 (A BANNER YEAR), let's reflect on what our 75th Anniversary year brought to our youth and our organization as a whole. We are very happy that God has shown favor on us.

This was my first year as your elected President and our board was very ambitious in our planning for 2016. Many of our goals were completed and some still need continuous work.

The first three months of the year involved planning for the things that make the Tuskegee Airmen Tuskegee Airmen. Our plan was shared with the organization in March and April and was well received, so we had our marching orders.

- Celebrate The 75th Anniversary of The Tuskegee Airmen
- Increase membership by 75 new members
- Increase our involvement in the EAA/Young Eagles program
- Increase our volunteering for events of the Chapter and Museum
- Train more docents
- Be more visible in our Community
- Re-establish relationships with The Yankee Air Museum and SANGB
- Promote the viewing of Luft-Gangster
- Support The Benjamin O Davis School
- Support the students in their quest for Pilot Licensure

As the year progressed we added more activities to better serve the youth in our Metropolitan area.

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| April – August  | EAA/Young Eagles   |
| April 12, 2016  | Metro Detroit Planning Breakfast   |
| May 1, 2016     | NAACP Dinner and Honor for LTC Alexander Jefferson   |
| June 24-26      | Detroit River Days Air Show Fire Works   |
| July 13-16      | National Conference TAI  |
| July 24         | Honors and Awards  |
| July 24         | Cruise Fundraiser  |
| August          | Heritage Festival, Idlewild, Michigan  |
| September 22-24 | African American Museum of History and Culture   |
| October 8       | Michigan Humanities Honors   |
| November 11-12  | Knights of The Legion of Honor Medal   |
| November 12     | 28th Annual Banquet and Honors Popovich  |
| December 8      | Annual Membership Banquet and Honors   |
| April to August | approximately 350 youngsters participated in this flight orientation program. One very special young lady that was shot took her first flight. |
| April           | Metro Detroit Youth Day planning that would involve 3500 Detroit area youth in July.   |
| May 1, 2016     | NAACP Dinner and Fundraiser Honoring LTC Jefferson with his long over due Medal.   |
| June 24- 26     | Detroit River Days Air Show  |
| July 13-16      | Tuskegee Airmen National Convention  |
| July 24         | Honors and Awards at the Charles Wright Museum and our Annual Cruise Fundraiser Special Honor for three student pilots                         |
| August          | Black Heritage Festival Celebration in Idlewild, Michigan  |
| September 24-26 | Commemoration of The African American Museum of History and Culture  |
| October 8       | Humanities in Flight program in Jackson, Michigan  |
| November 11-12  | Veterans Day Program, Honoring LTC Alexander Jefferson with The Knights of The Legion of Honor Medal that was established by Napoleon in 1802  |
| December 8      | Annual Members Banquet honoring you the MEMBERS  |

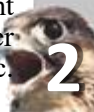
There were many other activities however these activities kind of summarize our efforts as we move forward.

There were many presentations to youth and we participated in two significant functions orchestrated by the Department of Natural Resources, that brought all of the fourth grade students from Detroit Public Schools to Our National Museum at Historic Fort Wayne. The best is yet to come. Are you ready?

REFLECT RE-ESTABLISH RE-DEDICATE

Be Blessed,  
**Miguel Thornton**  
 President  
 Detroit Chapter  
 Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.

The Hawk's Cry II



# LOCAL HAPPENINGS

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.



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 (75<sup>th</sup> 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.





## JANUARY 23, 2009 A WONDERFUL MAN

My father, William Horton Thompson, taught me many important skills that have helped me move through this life. He taught me how to braid hair, how to make a bed, and how to make the perfect fried egg. My father is one of those rare individuals who is open and accepting of people without pre-judgment. He is a strong man, yet mild-mannered. He appreciates humor and always greets you with a pleasant personality. I have learned much from him through example.

When I was a little girl, my father had a great job, but it required a lot of travel. He would fly out on Sunday evenings and return on Friday evenings. My mother and I would take him to the airport shuttle bus stop (with a bit of sadness) on Sunday evenings or to all the way to the airport if he was running late. On Friday evenings we would happily pick him up, anticipating the two full days we would have with him. Once every month or so he would spend a

week at home in Detroit, and that would just be heaven for both me and my mother. He had to write-up weekly reports, and his office was in the basement. I would love to go into the office, as it smelled of pipe tobacco and seemed like such an intriguing place. My mother would warn me not to bother him because he had work to do, but I would slip down there anyway and was always greeted with love and affection.

The only spanking I remember getting from him was when I smashed open my piggy bank so I could get money for the ice-cream man. My mother decided this time he would have to deal with the disciplining and said "wait till your father gets home, you are going to get a spanking". I'm sure the licks probably hurt him more than they hurt me. My father has always been accepting and supportive of pretty much everything I do. I think I have been blessed with having the best father in the world and would not change a single thing about him.

Growing up, he didn't talk about his military service, however he had a steel wardrobe in his office that housed his bomber jacket. I would sometimes look at it, as it seemed so interesting with its large fleece lapels. Even then, I thought there was something very special about it. My father is a modest man, so he really played down the fact he was a Tuskegee Airman. In 2007 he received the Congressional Gold Medal and in 2009 he attended the inauguration of President Obama. I had the honor to accompany my father to the inauguration. Our seats were great. We were about 200 yards from the stage area. We had a good view of the podium where the swearing in took place.

It seemed so surreal sitting there, so close to such a historic event that people had come to view from around the world. I wanted to take it all in so I could share it with future generations. I felt so blessed to be there and excited my father was able to experience this wonderful event.



## OBITUARY

William (Bill) Horton Thompson was born in Lansing, MI, March 12, 1919 to William Ora & Elsie Violet Thompson. He had an older half-brother, Milton (Tommy) and a younger sister Violet. He graduated from Lansing Central High School in 1936, shortly after which he completed a State of Michigan civil service examination. In June 1938, he was offered a clerk position with the Michigan Unemployment Compensation Commission at its headquarters office in Detroit. He left Lansing and moved to Detroit and lived with Tommy. They shared an apartment with 2 other bachelors.

Working at the state headquarters of the Michigan Unemployment Compensation Commission located in Highland Park, MI, he started out in the mail room wrapping packages and operating postage meter machines. Tommy loaned him \$140.00 to purchase a 1935 Ford so he could take a mail carrying job. Late in 1941 Bill could not get authorization to purchase tire retreads for his car so he could not carry the inter-office mail. After a few weeks, he got a job with General Motors (GM) as an arc welder and paid him \$1.35 per hour. He worked for several companies as a welder, the last of which was the American Metal Products Co. which was making engine mounts for B-24 bombers and had excellent working conditions. He became so skilled at aircraft arc welding he was promoted to repair welder at \$1.79 per hour. While there, he was called into service but the company got him a deferment because it was losing so many skilled workers to the armed services. After about 3 months, Uncle Sam called him again but the company could not get him another deferment. He joined the armed forces in February 1944.

At the Ft. Sheridan, IL reception center, Bill volunteered for flight training where he passed a series of tests which qualified him for flight training at Tuskegee Institute, AL. While waiting for a class to open, he would occasionally see Bill Bowie (his brother-in-law) marching a formation of his classmates from one location to another. After graduation, he moved into basic training at Tuskegee Army Air Field where he soloed the North American Texan (AT-6). Shortly after soloing the T-6 he became ill and was hospitalized 2 months, "washing back" 2 classes. Upon resuming flight training, he did not regain his flight proficiency in the allotted time. He was disappointed he did not have an opportunity to serve with his classmates. Bill was sent to, and completed, Flexible Gunnery training at Tyndall Field, FL. He was scheduled to go to the 477th Bomber Groups as a waist gunner in a B-25 bomber, but hostilities ceased so he was sent to Chanute Field, IL. He received an Honorable Discharge, with the rank of PFC, in May 1946.

In September, Bill moved back to Lansing where he lived with his mother and stepfather and attended Michigan State Agricultural College, where his father attended and was the first person of color to graduate. Back in Lansing, Bill graduated with a BA degree, majoring in Sales. While there, he and 6 other black men were initiated into Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity at the University of Michigan in December 1947. At the time there were no black Greek letter organizations on campus at State. May 1, 1948, these 7 men, along with 4 graduate students, who were Alpha's, formed Gamma Tau Chapter of A Phi A.

Bill had a part time job with the Lansing Community Center as secretary. Morrison Ryder was the Director. One time Morrison told Horton he knew a girl in Detroit he wanted him to meet, and he referred to her only as "Mike." In a few weeks, the Center held a dance and Morrison had invited Mike to attend. Bill walked into the building and saw Marian (Michael) Fewe standing in the lobby; he walked over and asked her to dance. While dancing, Ryder danced by and said, "Oh, I see you two have met." Bill replied, "This is Mike!?" Horton and Mike were married September 10, 1949. They had two children, Linda Lorraine and William Horton Thompson, Jr., who was promptly dubbed Chip (as in "chip off the old block").

In about spring of 1947, Bill became a Mason and eventually reached the rank of Past Exalted Ruler. He was also a Shriner.

Horton moved back to Detroit in March, 1950, after finishing college and worked for Dr. A. W. Curtis, a protégé of, and former assistant to Dr. George Washington Carver, as a door-to-door salesman. Dr. Curtis had a company which manufactured a number



of products made from peanuts. In, September 1950, Horton started a career as a salesman with The American Tobacco Company, calling on retail stores in the Detroit African-American market. In January 1954, Horton now, a.k.a. Bill, was promoted to Sales Supervisor with a territory that extended west to Kansas City, KS., all concentrating on the African American market. In 1957, Bill's title was changed to District Sales Manager. Upper management felt that Bill had a better knowledge of working in the African-American market than the white supervisors did. When Bill first joined the company, black sales reps could not be promoted. Normally, Bill would come home on weekends when working out of town. In the winter of 1974-75, Bill turned down a promotion. He became tired of traveling and being away from his family so he took an early retirement, April 30, 1976, after 25 years, 7 months and 8 days. That summer he and Mike traveled and had fun being together until September, when he took a consultant position with BPA Personnel, a black-owned executive search firm, which specialized in placing African-Americans in professional positions with companies. He won a number of trophies for being most productive Consultant of the Month and eventually became vice president of the company before he left in February of 1980. Bill then joined David S. Lewis & Associates, a similar type company, which went out of business in 1985. Then he worked for a couple of multi-level marketing companies (Pre-paid Legal and Matol, Inc.). He ceased active participation with these companies in 1996.

One of his former cadet classmates and a Detroit City Councilman, Ernest C. Browne, Jr. asked him to join the Tuskegee Airmen Association which he did in November 1973, which was the founding chapter of the organization. After his retirement, Horton became very active with the chapter and worked with a committee which was trying to set up a Tuskegee Airmen museum. After a number of years of effort, and with the help of Coleman A. Young, mayor of the City of Detroit and also a Tuskegee Airman, the National Historical Museum of Tuskegee Airmen was dedicated in May of 1987. The museum is housed in a building at Historic Fort Wayne in Detroit. Bill was elected to the Board of Governors of the museum and served various positions. In addition to serving on the Board of Directors of the Detroit Chapter, he was chair of the Membership Committee for over 10 years.

Bill is survived by his wife Michael, daughter Linda, son William Jr., granddaughters Drew and Jordynn, daughter-in-law Denise, nephew Bill Bowie, great nephews and nieces Gar Giles, Alan Bowie, Billie Bowie, Nneka Giles-Reynolds, Tisa Liles, and a host of friends.

## CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF WILLIAM "BILL" HORTON THOMPSON

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2016**

**10AM-FAMILY TIME**

**10:30AM APHA PHI ALPHA FRATERNITY OMEGA SERVICE**

**11-AM-SERVICE**

**12NOON-2:00PM-CELEBRATION OF LIFE**

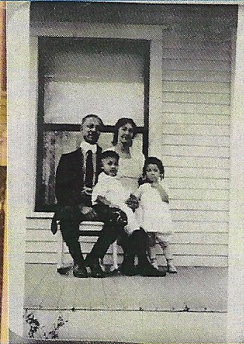
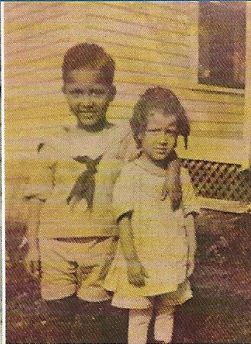
**IN LIEU OF FLOWERS, DONATIONS CAN BE MADE TO:  
DETROIT CHAPTER, TUSKEGEE AIRMEN INC.**

**CHRIST CHURCH DETROIT  
960 E JEFFERSON AVE, DETROIT, MI 48207  
MARYJANE PECK, INTERIM RECTOR**

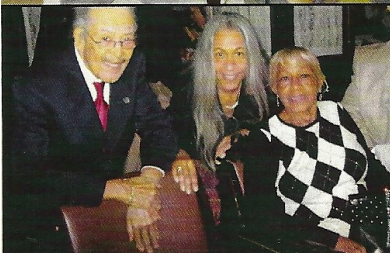
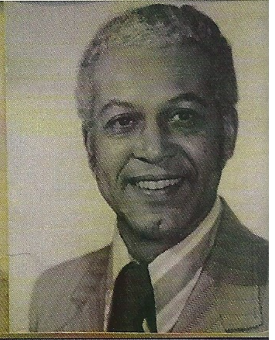
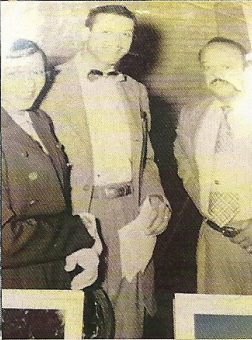
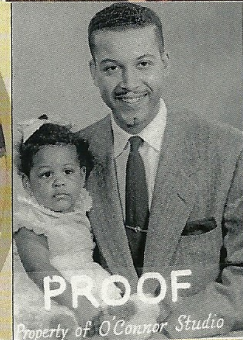


# LOCAL HAPPENINGS

## LOVING



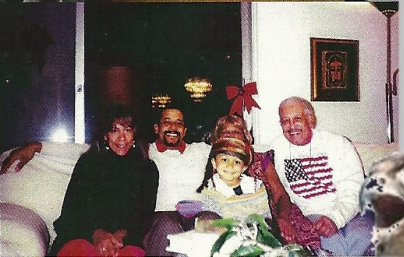
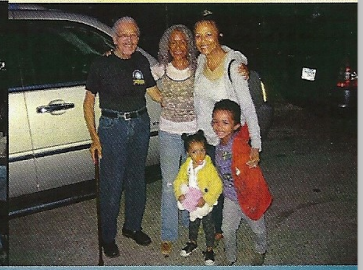
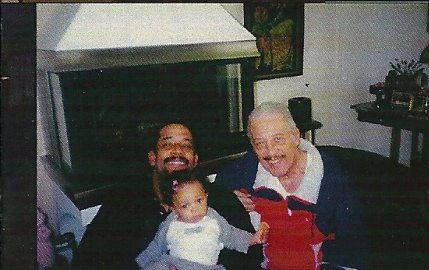
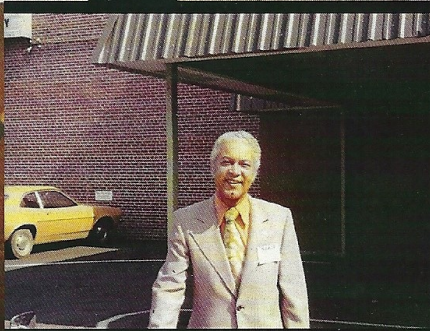
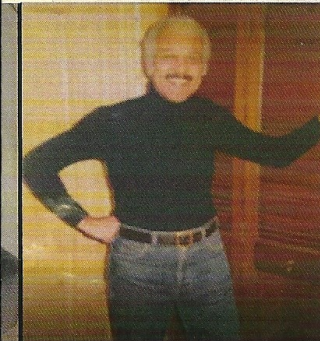
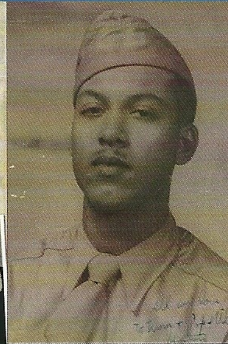
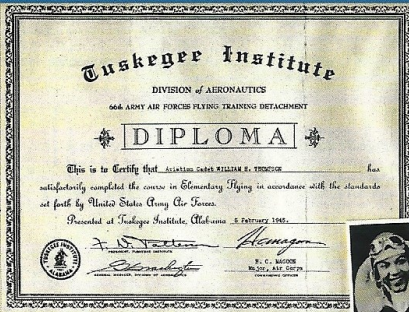
Horton  
Thompson





# LOCAL HAPPENINGS

## MEMORIES







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## Taking The Stage Premieres On ABC Thursday January 12!

By Jim Donnelly | Jan 5th, 2017

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The ABC Television Network celebrates the unveiling of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture with a two-hour program of music, dance and the spoken word called "Taking the Stage: African American Music and Stories That Changed America."



**GoTo Article**

yesterday, today and tomorrow. By honoring their legacy and sharing their experience, we can have a positive impact and educate people of all ages. These experiences fuel my passion to volunteer for Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. and the CAF Red Tail Squadron.

I'm also a member of the Urban Pilots Network. This group gives their time and talent to bridge the gap between aviation and the urban community. I currently participate in outreach programs with the group and try to "Inspire for Higher," which is our motto. Carving out time to give to these worthy groups isn't easy, but it's a labor of love that I believe is very important. It's my way of paying forward the opportunities the Tuskegee Airmen worked hard to ensure that people of color like myself could have.

It's a privilege to pilot the CAF Red Tail Squadron's P-51C Mustang around the country and speak to kids and adults about the importance of the history and legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen. I've particularly enjoyed the times I've worked directly with original Tuskegee Airmen who so generously give of their time to volunteer with our organizations. Their experience can translate to all ages and backgrounds. I've tried to live by the example they've set, and I hope my volunteer work can impart that positive message to others.

In the New Year, I wish you all a renewed and refreshed spirit to carry on the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen. May they be remembered and honored for generations to come.

Inspire for higher!  
**Bill Shepard**

Good Morning,

ABC is airing the concert that recognizes The Tuskegee Airmen. If you can please watch or tape the show. It is on this Thursday (12) from 9 PM to 11 PM. God bless you all and please share this with your friends and family. Miguel

## Museum Link

### Volunteering – A labor of love

Aviation has been a part of my life from a very young age. My first inspiration came from my father who was in the United States Marine Corps and served in a fighter squadron in the Vietnam War. After moving to Canada as a kid, I joined the Royal Canadian 19th and 27th air cadet squadrons where I participated in a plethora of fun and challenging activities that prepared me for a future in the cockpit. A string of experiences and hard work led me to become a pilot, and eventually fly warbirds. I'm humbled to have stood on the shoulders of the brave Tuskegee Airmen who paved the way for me.

I've had the opportunity to listen to many stories of how the Tuskegee Airmen have made a positive impact on so many lives. Their influence and inspiration spans the eras –



# LOCAL HAPPENINGS

## Holiday Party



The Hawk's Cry II



## Audley Coulthurst of Famed Tuskegee Airmen Dies in NYC at 92

by THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

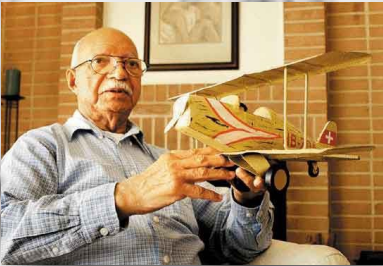
NEW YORK — A former member of the pioneering black aviation group the Tuskegee Airmen has died. Audley Coulthurst was 92. Audra Coulthurst says her father died Thursday at a Veterans Affairs facility in Brooklyn after suffering a cardiac arrest. Coulthurst enlisted in the Army in 1942 and became one of the first black military pilots in the U.S. Although Tuskegee Airmen faced discrimination in a segregated military, the fighter squadrons were among the most respected in World War II. Audra Coulthurst says after the war her father became a certified public accountant and served as controller of the National Urban League. He also is survived by his wife, Matilda Coulthurst, and a son, Jeffrey Coulthurst.

*Audley Coulthurst, left, is seen with fellow Tuskegee Airmen William Johnson, Wilfred R. DeFour and Herbert C. Thorpe in June 2016. Hans Pennink / AP*



## Virginia Beach veteran and member of the Tuskegee Airmen dies at age 95

By Brock Vergakis and Amir Vera  
The Virginian-Pilot Dec 15, 2016



VIRGINIA BEACH—A Virginia Beach veteran who was one of the first black servicemen chosen to fly combat aircraft during World War II as part of what later became known as the Tuskegee Airmen has died. Thurman Spriggs passed away at his home Monday, according to his obituary in The Virginian-Pilot. He was 95. Spriggs was one of nearly 1,000 black aviators selected by the Army Air Corps to be trained to fly and maintain combat aircraft from 1941 to 1946. Until then, blacks were prohibited from flying for the military. They were based at Tuskegee Airfield in Tuskegee, Ala. The group gained fame because it had one of the lowest loss records of all bomber-escort fighter groups, according to Tuskegee University. Their success also came at a time when segregation was the law of the land throughout the South. “The whole thing is something that young people should know. There is a huge difference between what things were like then and now,” Spriggs said in a 2008

Virginian-Pilot interview. Spriggs and 11 others were inducted into the Iowa Aviation Hall of Fame in 2006 for their military accomplishments and battles against racism. Spriggs was an accomplished track athlete who left Des Moines, Iowa, to join the Army in 1941. He first served in the 9th Cavalry, nicknamed the Buffalo Soldiers. He joined the Tuskegee Airmen in 1944 and graduated from flight school as a fighter pilot who flew single-engine aircraft. He served with the unit for two years, although he was never deployed overseas. He left the Army in 1946. Spriggs later earned a doctorate in theoretical nuclear physics from The Catholic University of America and devoted his life to education. He lived in Norfolk off and on from 1946 to 1969 and taught electrical engineering and physics at Norfolk State University. His wife, Julianne, was originally from Norfolk; they met while she was stationed at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Spriggs had three children: Patricia Spriggs, William Spriggs and Karen Baldwin. When reached Thursday night, Spriggs’ daughters said their father was humble. “I think that he was a model for a person who tried to live his life the right way. He was a man of character and integrity and he always carried himself that way,” Patricia Spriggs said. “He didn’t have to preach that because he lived it. The way he conducted himself was a model for us to live by.” Baldwin described her father as a thorough man. “No matter what he undertook, he took the time to research things down to the last iota,” she said. Spriggs’ children also described him as a family man. “He always seemed to have time with us,” Patricia said. “We would spend hours together. When we were little, he always made it a habit to have one or all of us around all the time.” Baldwin remembers spending time with her father in his office at Norfolk State University. “He used to let me program on his calculator,” she said. “I used to program things for his students to do. I remember that and appreciate that time with him.” He retired from the university in 1986 as assistant dean of what was then known as the School of Health Related Professions and Natural Sciences.

## Dayton man who trained with Tuskegee Airmen dies at 97

Barrie Barber, Staff Writer Wednesday, Dec. 21, 2016

DAYTON - A Dayton area man who was a member of the famed Tuskegee Airmen has died at age 97. Robert L. Harvey Sr., was in training with the group of pioneering African American airmen when the war ended in Europe, according to the Tuskegee Airmen Inc. He died Dec. 18. Harvey was a member of the Ohio Memorial Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen in Columbus. In a 2014 interview with this newspaper, the 1937 Dunbar High School graduate said he avoided being drafted in the Navy to join the Tuskegee Airmen. “There was no advancement for black people in the Navy at the time,” he said in the interview. “None.” The pioneering airmen flew in racially segregated units in Europe battling Nazi Germany and escorting U.S. bombers on dangerous wartime missions. “It’s sad but it’s also humbling to know he made an impact at a time where segregation was high,” said Coyle Mobley, 60, a cousin who lives in Harrison Twp. Some of Harvey’s fellow airmen had qualms about flying, but he never did. “I just felt a sense of jubilation,” he said in the 204 interview. “There’s nothing like being up there by yourself.” In 2007, Harvey attended a Washington, D.C., ceremony President George W. Bush presented the Tuskegee Airmen a Congressional Gold Medal. “We weren’t surprised,” said Harvey, who kept a bronze replica at his home. “We just wondered why it took so long.” Harvey had a 45-year career at the U.S. Postal Service, where he rose through the ranks to become a director of customer relations. He attended Miami University and the University of Dayton. He also was married to his wife, Cora, who preceded him in death. The couple had three adult children. Mobley said her cousin was a gentle man who never raised his voice and doted on his children and grandchildren.





## Ivan James McRae Jr. dies at 93; was a proud Tuskegee Airman

Updated January 3, 2017 5:46 PM

By Martin C. Evans [martin.evans@newsday.com](mailto:martin.evans@newsday.com)



For most of his life, former second lieutenant Ivan James McRae Jr., a B-25 pilot who was among the last of the Tuskegee Airmen, rarely spoke of his 1945 involvement in a standoff that helped end segregation in the U.S. military. But when a white commander at Freeman Army Airfield, Indiana, ordered McRae and other black officers not to enter the post's whites-only officers club — and to use the all-black club called “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” instead — McRae found himself at a critical moment of history. McRae, a Harlem native who settled on Long Island after the war, and raised four children at his Dix Hills home, died there Nov. 29. He was 93. What became known as the

Freeman Field Mutiny was a series of peaceful demonstrations in April 1945 by black Army officers who had been transferred to the Midwest airfield after racial altercations at airfields in Michigan and throughout the South. In all, more than 100 black officers were arrested for entering the officers club, or for refusing to formally accept the legitimacy of the club’s whites-only designation, according to a 1997 Air Force document. “Many of the pilots .... had flown in Europe as fighter pilots and .... were refused the use of the Officers Club because of their color,” McRae said in a 2010 oral history he made with his granddaughter, Briana R. McRae. The standoff persuaded the War Department to side with the protesters, and for the first time to place black officers in command of McRae’s all-black 477th Bombardment Group. Three years later, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981, which ordered the end of racial segregation in the U.S. military. “He never talked about it too much, because he considered the fighter pilots, who actually fought in Europe, to be the real heroes,” said Brian McRae, one of McRae’s three sons. For most of his life, Ivan James McRae, Jr., a B-25 pilot who was among the last of the Tuskegee Airmen, rarely spoke of his 1945 involvement in a standoff that helped end segregation in the U.S. military. But when a white commander at Freeman Army Airfield, Indiana ordered McRae and other black officers not to enter the post’s whites only officers club - and to use an all-black “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” instead - McRae was among those who refused. *Photo Credit:*



*Family* “In the short run, it led to greater segregation, because it removed white officers from the 477th,” said Daniel Haulman, who documents the Tuskegee Airmen for the Air Force Historical Research Agency. “But in the long run, it contributed to the desegregation of the Air Force and the military.” Born in Harlem to Jamaican immigrant parents, McRae was supporting himself as a railroad porter while studying mechanical engineering at Columbia University when America was pulled into World War II. “I was down on the platform where the trains were when I could hear a lot of yelling and screaming up in the waiting room,” he said in the 2010 oral history. “I ran upstairs and they were talking about the attack on Pearl Harbor.” He enlisted in the Army’s aviation cadet program, and in 1943 was selected for a first-ever program to include black men in pilot training, at Tuskegee Army Airfield in Alabama. Too tall at 6-foot-1 to fly fighter planes, McRae earned his wings as a twin-engine bomber pilot on Dec. 28, 1944, just four months before the Freeman Field Mutiny. The all-black program’s 996 pilot graduates eventually became known as the Tuskegee Airmen. Ivan James McRae Jr., a B-25 pilot who was among the last of the Tuskegee Airmen, died at his longtime Dix Hills home on Tuesday, Nov. 29, 2016. He was 93. *Photo Credit: McRae family* Although he was in training for missions against Japan, the war’s end spared him from combat. After his discharge as a second lieutenant, McRae completed his bachelor’s degree at Columbia in 1948, and married Marjorie Cox that October. The couple eventually settled on Long Island, where McRae worked for various defense-industry companies, including Fairchild Space and Defense Systems, in Farmingdale. “The recognition for the service of the Tuskegee Airmen like Mr. McRae is long overdue,” then-Rep. Steve Israel (D-Huntington) said in 2010, while presenting McRae with a facsimile of the Congressional Gold Medal awarded collectively to the Tuskegee Airmen in 2007. McRae is survived by his wife; sons Brian, of River Vale, New Jersey, Alan, of St. Albans, Queens, and Donald, of Dix Hills; and daughter Beverly McRae, of Dix Hills. He was cremated.

## Tuskegee Airman Dr. Thurston L. Gaines, Jr., dies at 94

MURRIETA, Calif. - One of the original Tuskegee Airmen, Dr. Thurston L. Gaines, Jr., died in California Saturday. He was 94. Gaines, as one of World War II's Tuskegee Airmen, was one of the United States' first black military pilots. He flew a P-51 Mustang in 1945. In April 1945, Gaines was shot down over Germany and captured. He was held in German prisons until he was liberated in June of 1945 by Gen. Patton's division. Gaines received the Congressional Gold Medal from President George W. Bush in 2007. He also received the Purple Heart. Gaines became a medical doctor as a civilian and worked as a surgeon for 17 years in New York. In retirement, Gaines lived in Sun City West and Litchfield Park before moving to California. In 2008, Gaines was interviewed for the Veterans History Project about his service. Watch a clip from that interview in the player above. Watch the [full interview here](#). "Tuskegee Airmen," refers to the men and women, African-Americans and Caucasians, who were involved in the "Tuskegee Experience", the Army Air Corps program to train African Americans to fly and maintain combat aircraft." - [Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.](#) Dr. Thurston Gaines, Jr., one of the original Tuskegee Airmen, died Saturday. In this 2008 interview, he describes being shot down and captured by Germans in WWII. (Video: Veterans Historical



Gaines (right) with another pilot. (Photo: Toni Frissell)

Project) Thurston L. Gaines, Jr., Freeport, NY, Class 44-G in Ramielli, Italy, March 1945. (Photo: Toni Frissell via LOC.gov)

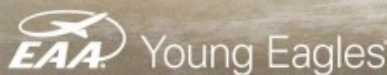
# Why I Fly Young Eagles

"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](http://YoungEagles.org/volunteers)  
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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**

