

= Red Tail Squadron =

The Red Tail Squadron , part of the non @-@ profit Commemorative Air Force ( CAF ) and until June 2011 , known as the Red Tail Project , maintains and flies a World War II era North American P @-@ 51C Mustang . The twice @-@ restored aircraft flies to create interest in the history and accomplishments of the members of the World War II @-@ era 332nd Fighter Group , also known as the Tuskegee Airmen , whose distinctive red markings on the tails of the P @-@ 51s they flew during that war , gave the organization its name .

The all African American 332d Fighter Group originally flew 15 @,@ 550 sorties as bomber escorts in the Mustang ; eventually the Airmen , who were originally shunned in the white military , acquired the right to fly combat missions . In 1970 , the Commemorative Air Force acquired an original P @-@ 51 to include in their educational program . In 1980 , Don Hinz took charge of the aircraft 's restoration , and developed the idea of the Red Tail Project , named for the distinctive red paint on the Airmen 's aircraft . Originally conceived as a restoration project , Red Tail evolved into an education program . Although the P @-@ 51 was restored , mechanical failure caused a crash and the death of the pilot , a retired U.S. Navy commander ; the Tuskegee Airmen endorsed and encouraged the aircraft 's second restoration , and the newly restored P @-@ 51C made its debut at AirVenture 2009 in Oshkosh , Wisconsin .

Since the 1990s , the Red Tail Squadron has raised over \$ 2 million ( US ) for the aircraft 's two restorations , its ongoing maintenance and associated educational programs . The Mustang has been featured in two documentary films : Red Tail Reborn , and Flight of the Red Tail .

= = The Tuskegee Airmen = =

The Tuskegee Airmen / t?s?ki??i? / is the popular name of a group of African American pilots who fought in World War II as the 332nd Fighter Group of the US Army Air Corps . This was the first unit of African American military aviators in the United States armed forces . During World War II , in much of the United States , African Americans were still subjected to Jim Crow laws and the American military itself was racially segregated . Legal and social prejudice prevented the Airmen from flying combat missions . Despite their adversities , the Tuskegee Airmen flew with distinction : In 2007 , 350 Tuskegee Airmen and their widows received the Congressional Gold Medal , and the airfield where they trained has been designated as Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site . Although some sources claimed the Airmen had a perfect record in their 15 @,@ 000 missions as bomber escorts , recent research has revealed they lost 25 bombers .

= = Provenance = =

At the conclusion of World War II in 1945 , The United States Army sold off military surplus and for \$ 1 ( \$ 13 @.@ 1 today ) Montana State University in Bozeman , Montana bought a P @-@ 51C aircraft , which it parked on its campus in front of the engineering building . According to the Red Tail Reborn Internet Movie Database page , in a prank , drunken students taxied the aircraft around the campus in the late 1940s . Thereafter , the aircraft was secured to the ground with steel and concrete . Otherwise , the P @-@ 51C was essentially left alone in Montana , except for an occasional coat of silver paint . In 1965 , when the University wanted to add a parking lot , restorer Lloyd Creek bought it from the University for \$ 1 , provided that he could remove it from the campus in 24 hours of notification in winning the bid . To move the P @-@ 51C promptly to Billings , Montana necessitated the removal of the wings , which were sawed off with a circular saw . When the aircraft arrived in Billings , the wings were reattached to the fuselage .

In 1970 , frustrated with restoration efforts , Creek donated the P @-@ 51C to the CAF , which disassembled the aircraft and shipped it to the organization 's home base in Texas . While awaiting restoration , the aircraft endured a hurricane described erroneously in the documentary as Hurricane Beulah , although that storm was an earlier , 1967 storm . Regardless , a hurricane exposed numerous parts of the aircraft to seawater damage . Several CAF volunteers attempted to rehab the

aircraft in Minneapolis , Minnesota , Texas , Council Bluffs , Iowa , and finally in the late 1980s at the home of the Southern Minnesota wing of the CAF , which had just completed the restoration of the North American B @-@ 25 Mitchell bomber , Miss Mitchell . After noting the P @-@ 51C was in need of restoration , Don Hinz channeled his energy and talents into the emerging Red Tail project . The aircraft is now one of only four existing P @-@ 51C Mustangs in existence . As one of the four flying Mustangs , it is worth \$ 2 @. @ 5 million .

= = History = =

The Commemorative Air Force , which has approximately 9 @, @ 000 members and a fleet of 156 aircraft , is an educational association with the purpose to pay tribute to American military aviation through flight , exhibition and remembrance . It has been collecting , restoring and flying vintage historical aircraft for more than half a century . In the 1990s , the CAF 's Minnesota Wing began restoring a P @-@ 51 that many branches of the CAF organization had attempted to restore but found the task beyond their capabilities . The P @-@ 51C once served Capt. Andrew " Jug " Turner . Pilot Don Hinz , a retired United States Navy commander based at Fleming Field in South St. Paul , Minnesota , heard of the project and enlisted some experts as well as named the effort " The Red Tail Project " .

Originally , the restoration was attempted at Fleming Field . After soliciting the assistance of outside contractors from North Dakota , the aircraft was airborne in May 2001 . The P @-@ 51C , which was named " Tuskegee Airmen " , was included in numerous air shows to tell the history of the pilot group . From May 2001 to May 2004 , the aircraft flew before more than an estimated three million people . By 2004 , Hinz envisioned an educational program around the restored aircraft . In a May 2004 show in Red Wing , Minnesota the camshaft drive of the Rolls Royce Merlin engine failed . Although Hinz successfully landed the aircraft between two houses in a residential suburb , both wings were ripped off and the body was badly damaged . A tree damaged in the crash fell on Hinz , causing head trauma from which he did not recover .

The Tuskegee Airmen decided to restore the aircraft . The five @-@ year restoration occurred at Tri @-@ State Aviation in Wahpeton , North Dakota . In 2007 , Gerry Beck , one of the primary restorers , was in a fatal collision of his P @-@ 51A and a P @-@ 51D during AirVenture 2007 . Beck was the owner of Tri @-@ State Aviation , but about a half dozen other CAF volunteer aviation mechanics contributed to the effort to pick up where he left off . The rebuilding continued with the mounting of the engine in 2008 and the mating of the wing in 2009 . On July 22 , 2009 , four days before AirVenture 2009 in Oshkosh , Wisconsin , the P @-@ 51C had its first flight . Then , it was flown to Wisconsin for its public debut . After the show it returned to Minnesota with a 6 AT @-@ 6 escort . The aircraft has also served a tribute via military flyovers for fallen Tuskegee Airmen .

In 2011 , the volunteer @-@ driven organization changed its name from the " Red Tail Project " to the " CAF Red Tail Squadron " and also completed construction of the RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit as an additional tool to help tell the story of these pilots and their support personnel ( who are also known as Tuskegee Airmen ) . The Mustang and the RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit appear together at air shows , and the Traveling Exhibit also goes to schools and other youth @-@ oriented venues .

= = Documentary = =

After the 2004 crash , the restoration became the impetus for a nationwide fund raising effort and attracted the attention of Adam White , an independent film maker who was , at the time , filming a documentary on vintage aircraft restoration called The Restorers . He was attracted to both the aircraft and the cause , and his 2007 historical documentary , Red Tail Reborn won Emmy Award recognition in his home state of Ohio , where it was first broadcast in February 2007 , and , subsequently released on DVD in March of that year . Narrated by Michael Dorn of Star Trek fame , himself a pilot and warbird owner , the film documents the difficulties of the restoration of the P @-@ 51C and the travails of the Tuskegee Airmen . The following year PBS picked up the film in its Black

History Month programming . White also completed a sequel , Flight of the Red Tail , a 12 @-@ minute film released in 2009 .

The restoration , completed in 2009 , cost \$ 1 million . In 2005 , the Red Tail Project , which is not for profit , sought to raise about \$ 2 million to fund the initial restoration . The organization held several types of events to raise funds . Since then , community @-@ based organizations adopted the project . For example , in Wahpeton , North Dakota , where the aircraft was restored , each August , the " Red Tail Run " is held . This motorcycle and vehicle run , which starts at the Harry Stern Airport , raises money for the project . In 2008 , the organization hired Fund Raising Strategies , a fund raising specialist firm , to develop a direct mail fund raising program .

= = The RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit = =

The Red Tail Project endeavors to preserve the legacy of the airmen through aviation education . Going forward , the group made plans in 2009 , to add a mobile exhibition in the form of a semi @-@ trailer truck and a 53 @-@ foot ( 16 m ) semi @-@ trailer . The name of the educational traveling exhibition program is entitled " RISE ABOVE " . It is intended to precede the Red Tail Project P @-@ 51 exhibitions .

The " RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit " was introduced at EAA AirVenture 2011 . It consists of a 53 @-@ foot ( 16 @.@ 2 m ) long semi trailer and tractor . The trailer , which has colorful graphics on all four sides , has expandable sides and houses a 40 @-@ foot ( 12 @.@ 2 m ) long , curved IMAX movie screen plus comfortable seating for 30 guests ; it is also climate controlled . An original IMAX movie called RISE ABOVE , developed and filmed specifically for the Red Tail Squadron and the unique movie screen , is shown . The traveling exhibit goes to air shows with the Red Tail Project Mustang and spends 40 weeks per year at schools and places where young people congregate . The idea is to take the story of the Tuskegee Airmen , and how they overcame so many obstacles by setting goals and working to meet them , directly to the students who can benefit from hearing about the Airmen 's experiences . The RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit is sponsored by the Texas Flying Legends Museum .