# Site

Person: THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

Location: Who Were They?

Thumbnail Photo: img/carousel/TuskegeeAirmen.png

Detail Photo: img/tuskegee-details/1-Tuskegee.png

Title: In Training

Caption: The Tuskegee Airmen were dedicated, patriotic young men who become the United States’ first black military airmen. In 1941, after passing rigorous entrance exams, the first group of African American aviation cadets began their training at Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama.

Credit: FIRST CLASS OF TUSKEGEE CADETS, TUSKEGEE AIR FIELD, 1941 | U.S. Air Force

Detail Photo: img/tuskegee-details/2-Tuskegee.png

Title: It Takes a Team

Caption: In addition to pilots, black navigators, bombardiers, gunnery crews and mechanics were also trained at segregated bases across the nation. All are considered Tuskegee Airmen.

Credit: STAFF SGT. JAMES McGEE WORKING ON P-39, ITALY, 1944 | U.S. AIR FORCE

Detail Photo: img/tuskegee-details/3-Tuskegee.png

Title: Legends & Heroes

Caption: The 99th Fighter Squadron flew aircraft in combat over North Africa, Sicily and Italy. They flew alongside heavy bombers, defending them against enemy aircraft. The 99th became famous for flying 200 of their 205 missions without the loss of a single bomber! These heroes had the best record of any fighter group — leading to the legend that they “never lost a bomber.”

Credit: 1st LT. LEE RAYFORD OF THE 99th FIGHTER SQUADRON, 1940s | NARA

Detail Photo: img/tuskegee-details/4-Tuskegee.png

Title: Fight & Fury

Caption: The 332nd Fighter Group, known as the “Red Tails,” defended their bombers fiercely. In 1945, they shot down or damaged eight, technologically-advanced German jet fighters. Because of their reputation for tenacity, enemy fighter pilots were less likely to attack a bomber if it was escorted by the “Red Tails.”

Credit: 332nd FLEW P-51 MUSTANG WITH DISTINCTIVE MARKINGS, 1940s | U.S. AIR FORCE

Detail Photo: img/tuskegee-details/5-Tuskegee.png

Title: A Legacy of Honor

Caption: The outstanding record of black airmen in World War II stood in stark opposition to racist stereotypes of the time. Tuskegee Airmen had to fight the enemy abroad and then fight prejudice and bigotry at home. Their accomplishments and dignity helped lead to social change as the military, and later America, moved toward integration and equity.

Credit: TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, 1942 | LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

# Site

Person: MACK HOPKINS

Location: Flight Instructor

Thumbnail Photo: img/carousel/Hopkins.png

Detail Photo: img/hopkins-details/1-Hopkins.png

Title: Wiley Graduate

Caption: Mack Hopkins grew up in Marshall. His parents taught at Wiley College. In 1942, Mack graduated from Wiley. Soon afterwards, he qualified to join the Tuskegee Airmen.

Credit: WILEY GRADUATING CLASS, 1942 | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/hopkins-details/2-Hopkins.png

Title: Top of the Class

Caption: Mack and his fellow cadets had to study and train in a rigorous program. Because of restrictive quotas placed on black pilots, only about half earned their wings. Mack was at the top of his class!

Credit: MACK HOPKINS (3rd FROM LEFT) AND COLLEAGUES, 1940s | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/hopkins-details/3-Hopkins.png

Title: Flight Instructor

Caption: Because of his skills, Mack Hopkins became one of the military’s first black flight instructors. While the other pilots he’d trained with went off to war, Mack stayed behind and trained hundreds more talented men.

Credit: MACK HOPKINS WITH COLLEAGUES, 1940s | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/hopkins-details/4-Hopkins.png

Title: Photographer

Caption: Mack loved photography and captured many images of life at the Tuskegee Army Airfield. He also used his skills in flight as an aerial photographer.

Credit: MACK HOPKINS WITH CAMERA, 1940s | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/hopkins-details/5-Hopkins.png

Title: Play Ball!

Caption: Mack Hopkins captured this image of the Tuskegee Army Airfield baseball team. Do you think the team includes both white and black servicemen? A few years after this photo was taken, Jackie Robinson officially integrated Major League Baseball.

Credit: TUSKEGEE AIRMEN PLAYING BASEBALL, 1940s | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/hopkins-details/6-Hopkins.png

Title: Living with Discrimination

Caption: Mack Hopkins served as an officer in the Tuskegee Airmen, training pilots for the duration of the war. When the war was over, Mack pursued a career in aerospace engineering. Black scientists were not given the same opportunities as their white peers. Ultimately, Mack took a job as a postman in California.

Credit: MACK HOPKINS WITH COLLEAGUES, 1940s | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/hopkins-details/7-Hopkins.png

Title: Still Flying

Caption: No airline would hire Mack or any of the pilots he trained to be commercial pilots. Refusing to be grounded, Mack bought a small plane and started the Fleet Wing Flying Club in Compton, California.

Credit: MACK HOPKINS WITH TAYLOR CRAFT AIRPLANE, 1955 | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/hopkins-details/8-Hopkins.png

Title: Hometown Hero

Caption: In retirement, Mack went back to work — this time as an aerospace engineer! He worked on NASA projects, military projects and on commercial satellites. Later, he returned to his home in Harrison County, serving on the school board and sharing his experiences with a new generation of talented young people.

Credit: MACK HOPKINS, 1940s | HCHM COLLECTIONS

# Site

Person: ROMEO WILLIAMS

Location: Fighter Pilot

Thumbnail Photo: img/carousel/Williams.png

Detail Photo: img/williams-details/1-Williams.png

Title: First to Fly

Caption: Romeo Williams grew up in Marshall where his parents ran a funeral home. In 1941, he graduated from Bishop College. He was the first black Texan to pass the Army Air Corps exam and qualify to become a flight cadet.

Credit: ROMEO WILLIAMS, 1942 | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/williams-details/2-Williams.png

Title: Taking Flight

Caption: In 1943, Romeo Williams graduated, earning the rank of Second Lieutenant and his pilot’s wings. Due to strict racial quotas, only about half of flight cadets achieved this status.

Credit: ROMEO WILLIAMS (STANDING, FAR RIGHT) AND TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, 1943 | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/williams-details/3-Williams.png

Title: Wasted Talent?

Caption: Like the majority of Tuskegee Airmen pilots, Romeo was denied the opportunity to fly in combat. Romeo’s assignments included ferrying aircraft to different bases throughout the country. Many saw this discrimination against black servicemen as wasteful and wrong.

Credit: ROMEO WILLIAMS (2nd FROM RIGHT) AND TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, 1943 | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/williams-details/4-Williams.png

Title: From Aviator to Advocate

Caption: After the war, Romeo became a Civil Rights lawyer. Romeo was part of the Dallas law firm that argued Sweatt v. Painter before the United States Supreme Court — successfully ending segregation at the University of Texas’ Law School.

Credit: HEMAN MARION SWEATT WITH NAACP OFFICIALS, 1950 | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/williams-details/5-Williams.png

Title: Change Begins at Home

Caption: In 1956, Romeo moved home to Marshall and established his law office. Marshall was still deeply segregated. In 1960, Romeo helped students at Wiley and Bishop Colleges to organize peaceful protests against segregation.

Credit: STUDENTS PRAY DURING PROTEST, 1960 | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/williams-details/6-Williams.png

Title: Fighting for Justice

Caption: Many of the student protesters were arrested. Romeo Williams served as their lawyer. He encouraged Marshall’s black community to help bail the students out of jail and garnered additional support from the NAACP.

Credit: STUDENT PROTESTORS WITH POLICE, 1960 | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/williams-details/7-Williams.png

Title: Losing a Legend

Caption: Romeo was driving two of his young clients back from a trial at the Marshall courthouse when his car was hit by a switch engine on the Evans Street railroad crossing. Romeo and one of the students, Mattie Mae Etta Johnson, were killed. Soon afterward, the convictions of the student protestors were reversed and dismissed.

Credit: ROMEO WILLIAMS AT CITY COURT, 1960 | HCHM COLLECTIONS

# Site

Person: FRED WEATHERSBY

Location: Flight Crew

Thumbnail Photo: img/carousel/Weathersby.png

Detail Photo: img/weathersby-details/1-Weathersby.png

Title: Staff Sergeant Weathersby

Caption: Fred Weathersby grew up in Marshall. After graduating from Bishop College, he joined the Tuskegee Airmen where he earned the rank of staff sergeant and trained as a part of a flight crew.

Credit: FRED WEATHERSBY (LEFT) AND FRIEND, 1940s | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/weathersby-details/2-Weathersby.png

Title: A Team Effort

Caption: Although most people are more familiar with the story of the Tuskegee pilots, there were over 14,000 servicemen who served as pilots, bombardiers, navigators, flight trainers, mechanics and support personnel.

Credit: NAVIGATORS, 1944 | NARA

Detail Photo: img/weathersby-details/3-Weathersby.png

Title: In Flight Service

Caption: As part of the flight crew, Fred Weathersby learned to provide tactical and operational support for missions.

Credit: FRED WEATHERSBY IN TUSKEGEE, 1940s | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/weathersby-details/4-Weathersby.png

Title: Support Service

Caption: Women worked on post at Tuskegee Airfield. Local Tuskegee Airman, Mack Hopkins, saved this picture of civilian and military staff attending the “medic’s dance.”

Credit: MEDIC’S DANCE, 1940s | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/weathersby-details/5-Weathersby.png

Title: After the War

Caption: Fred Weathersby returned to Marshall after the war. He pursued his interest in photography by taking a course at Bishop College. He went to work for Smith Steel Casting as a pattern clerk. Later, he worked at the Longhorn Ary Ammunition Plant.

Credit: FRED WEATHERSBY IN TUSKEGEE, 1940S | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/weathersby-details/6-Weathersby.png

Title: Family Traditions

Caption: Fred Weathersby and his wife Rachel were married for 59 years. They had three children. Fred Jr. followed in his father's footsteps by serving his country in the Vietnam War with the U.S. Navy.

Credit: FRED WEATHERSBY JR., 1970S | COURTESY FRED WEATHERSBY JR.

# Site

Person: CHARLIE JOHNSON

Location: Bomber Pilot

Thumbnail Photo: img/carousel/Johnson.png

Detail Photo: img/johnson-details/1-Johnson.png

Title: Where’s Charlie?

Caption: Marshall native, Charlie Johnson, joined the Tuskegee Airmen and trained as a pilot. We have no known photos of Charlie, but he may be the man labeled “Johnson,” (kneeling, 4th from right) in this photo from Mack Hopkin’s scrapbook.

Credit: GROUP PHOTO, TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, 1940s | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/johnson-details/2-Johnson.png

Title: Bomber Pilot

Caption: Charlie Johnson was one of a select group of Tuskegee pilots chosen to be trained to fly the enormous B-25 bomber. Mack Hopkins saved this picture of the pilots in front of their training aircraft before they left Tuskegee for their new assignment as part of the 477th Bombardment Group.

Credit: B-25 PILOTS, 1940s | HCHM COLLECTIONS

Detail Photo: img/johnson-details/3-Johnson.png

Title: Facing Racism

Caption: Veteran Tuskegee airmen and freshly trained pilots joined the 477th, led by Colonel Selway. He did not support the idea of an integrated military and actively worked against the 477th. He encouraged bigoted attitudes, provided inadequate facilities, and only appointed whites to leadership positions.

Credit: COLONEL ROBERT R. SELWAY REVIEWS THE 477th, 1940s | NARA

Detail Photo: img/johnson-details/4-Johnson.png

Title: Unfair Segregation

Caption: The 477th was under the command of Major General Frank Hunter, who told them, “This is my base and, as long as I am in command, there will be no social mixing of the white and colored officers. The single Officers Club on base will be used solely by white officers.” According to military code, the black pilots and officers should have been admitted to the club.

Credit: PILOTS AND GROUND OFFICERS IN FRONT OF BOMBER, 1940s | NARA

Detail Photo: img/johnson-details/5-Johnson.png

Title: Civil Disobedience

Caption: Knowing that their commanders, Selway and Hunter, were in violation of military rules, officers of the 477th, including Charlie Johnson, staged a peaceful protest. They entered an officer’s club at Freemen Field and refused to leave. Selway had them arrested!

Credit: PROTESTERS BEING TRANSFERRED TO AWAIT TRIAL, 1945 | LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Detail Photo: img/johnson-details/6-Johnson.png

Title: A Step Forward

Caption: Over a hundred black officers participated in the “Freeman Field Mutiny.” Ultimately, their protest was successful. General George Marshall ordered the officers released. Selway lost his command and the Armed Forces took another step towards full integration. The 477th became a model for future peaceful protests in the Civil Rights Movement.

Credit: MEMBERS OF THE 477th, 1940s | NARA

Detail Photo: img/johnson-details/7-Johnson.png

Title: Coming Home

Caption: Charlie Johnson came home to Marshall and enrolled at Wiley College. He worked as the first black salesman at Manly’s auto store downtown while he finished his degree. After graduation, Charlie became a flight instructor at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls. After his death in 1973, his brother, fellow veteran Walter Johnson, kept his memory alive.

Credit: WALTER JOHNSON WITH PORTRAITS OF CHARLIE JOHNSON, MARSHALL NEWS MESSENGER, APRIL 4, 2018