

# Tuskegee Airmen Inc.

Spring 2005



## From The President



Colonel Jones

Dear ECCTAI Member,

The support that I have received from the members of this chapter has been overwhelming. As the president, I am always adjusting my course, to make the leadership role that this office plays, a contributing position to the welfare of all of those who value the Tuskegee Airmen, and their legacy. I consider myself lucky and privileged to be the leader of such an outstanding organization, with the quality of people whom make things happen in an ever changing world.

I petition you that...Without you and your support, there is no ECCTAI. Without your commitment to the mission, the mission will falter and come to a halt. Don't let this happen! We as the ECCTAI should be "the first in all we do". Volunteer, participate, and don't be afraid to jump in and get your hands dirty. That is what I have seen in the past and I am sure that this will increase in the future. Be the role model and let the ECCTAI set the example for all others to follow!

Very respectfully,  
TARO K. JONES, Colonel  
*President*

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## Upcoming TAI Activities

- ECCTAI Golf Tournament will be held on June 1. Contact Bill Broadwater for information.
- The Chapter's summer picnic will be held at Dennis McDuffie's. Date and time to be announced.
- 34th Annual Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. National Convention will be held on August 16-20, 2005 in Orlando, Florida. To access registration form and convention details, go to <http://www.taiconvention.com/>
- ECCTAI Autumn Gala Luncheon, Sunday, October 16, 2005.

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## Important Message on Membership and Dues

From the Treasurer, Walter Jackson

2005 dues are requested from now until May 31. Receipt by ECCTAI Treasurer will ensure that your name is listed in the 2005 National Directory. Dues must be paid and processed through the local chapter, ECCTAI. Membership cards will be mailed from National Headquarters.

Regular membership dues are \$100; Life Members \$50; active duty military \$45. Send the Form 2 with your payment to: ECCTAI, PO Box 62404, Washington, DC 20029.

**"Enriched By Our Past – Prepared For Our Future"**

## SPOTLIGHT ON Col. Elmer Jones, USAF (Ret.) AN ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN



*Col. Elmer Jones,  
USAF (RET)*

As one of three graduates of the Howard University Primary Civilian Pilot Training program selected for advanced flight training, Elmer Jones was sent to Tuskegee Institute, Alabama in the summer of 1940 to be a student pilot in the first black Secondary Civilian Pilot Training program.

In February 1941, the Army Air corps offered Jones an opportunity to participate in Aviation Cadet training as a non-flying officer. He reported to Chanute Field to join five other black aviation cadets, to be trained as Technical Officers for the 99th Fighter squadron.

After six months of class and shop instruction, the cadets were transferred to the Tuskegee Army Flying School for three months of hands-on experience. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Jones was immediately commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, trained in the specialty of aircraft repair and technical supply.

Jones became Commander and Engineering Officer of the AAF Service Detachment # 99,

and shipped overseas with the 99th Fighter Squadron in April 1943. The Detachment performed essential services for the Squadron until it became a part of the 332nd Fighter Group. When the 332nd and the 96th Air Service Group arrived in Italy, the 366th Squadron of the 96th was assigned to service the 332nd with Major Jones in command.

After returning to the United States, Jones served in a variety of positions, including Base Director of Maintenance and Supply at Lockbourne Air Force Base in Ohio. He earned his MS degree in Electronics from the University of Illinois and an MBA degree in Research & Development (R&D) Management from the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. After several years of service in R&D assignments, Jones was transferred to Air Force Headquarters on the staff of the Assistant Chief of Staff for R&D.

Col. Jones retired from the USAF in 1970 and was appointed Assistant Commissioner for Telecommunications as a senior level, GS17, General Services Administration, where he worked until retirement in 1980. Col. Jones is an active member of the East Coast Chapter.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- Prince Georges' Community College has proclaimed April 21 as Leroy Battle Day. Leroy Battle is being lauded for his work in the community.
- Dr. Alan Gropman will speak on the Tuskegee Airmen Project at the Library of Congress on May 26 at noon.
- Leroy Battle will be honored on Saturday August 27, 1300 to 1700 hours at the Jaycees Community Center, 3090 Crain Hwy, Waldorf, MD 20601, 301/ 645-1244. The cost will be \$40 per person. For information contact Don Tolson 301/627-8180

## SPOTLIGHT ON James W. Pryde AN ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN



James W. Pryde

James W. Pryde, an original Tuskegee Airman, was recently recognized by the National Museum Foundation, Inc. (of which Mr. Pryde is a Board Member) for his work as a Cryptologist with the National Security Agency (NSA), then, the Armed Forces

Security Agency (AFSA). The following are excerpts from the Foundation's publication:

Mr. Pryde credits his successes in life to his parents and extended family, his education in the District of Columbia's segregated school system, and to his Tuskegee Experience. That Tuskegee Experience began in 1941, when he entered the Army Air Corps at the age of seventeen as a pre-aviation cadet. He was sent to Keesler Field, MS, for basic training and testing. The 477<sup>th</sup> was in need of combat crewmembers, not pilots. Pryde was selected to attend radio operator school to send and receive Morse code and perform first echelon maintenance on electronic equipment of multi-engine aircraft.

When the war ended, Pryde was sent to gunnery school, then to work on the flight line as both a radio mechanic and an aircraft radio operator. He was assigned to Squadron Q, the

Negro Squadron. On that assignment, he received an Army Commendation medal. Mr. Pryde relates that the two white soldiers who shared the medal and were awarded theirs on the Post Parade Ground. His medal came to Squadron Q in a plain brown bag.

He was given a confidential clearance in gunnery school to work on the electronic gun sight and a secret clearance to work on the P-63 night fighter. With these clearances and his experience, he was prepared for and employed at the AFSA. He became an intelligence analyst studying satellite photographs. During the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, he identified the hidden communications vehicle equipment which helped show that Soviet missile sites were being built within 90 miles of Florida.

He furthered his career by working with electronic and signals analysis, becoming a member of the Scientific Intelligence Committee, a senior analyst assigned to work with missiles and space activities on the Guided Missiles and Astronautics Intelligence Committee. He culminated his career becoming Director of the NSA/DIA Defense Special Missile and Astronautics Center. He was also the National Cryptologic Representative to the OSD and the JCS. He retired in 1980 as the Agency Assistant Deputy Director. Mr. Pryde is now an active member with the East Coast Chapter's Speakers' Bureau.

### TAI Note Cards

The Amenities Committee is selling Tuskegee Airmen note cards; choice of the black and white ECCTAI logo or color picture of the P-51. Ten note cards sell for \$10.00, mailing included. Monies will go to the Education Assistance Fund and are tax deductible. Contact Roslyn Marchbanks-Robinson.

## Congressional Gold Medal Proposed for Tuskegee Airmen



*Senator Levin meets with Tuskegee Airmen, (L-R) Elmer Jones, Charles McGee and Wylie Selden.*

Michigan Senator, Carl Levin, introduced bipartisan legislation to authorize the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal collectively to the Tuskegee Airmen. He stated, "The Tuskegee Airmen were not only unique in their military record, but they inspired revolutionary reform in the armed forces, paving the way for integration of the armed services in the U.S." Senator Levin was proud to say that "155 Tuskegee Airmen originated from my state of Michigan." The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions.

To access more information, go to <http://levin.senate.gov/newsroom/release.cfm>.

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## African American History Month – 79 Years



*L-R: Charles McGee, Elmer Jones, Ira O'Neal, George Watson, Wylie Selden, Louise Mohr.*

Original Tuskegee Airmen, along with other distinguished African Americans, were invited to the White House to celebrate the 79<sup>th</sup> year of African American History Month, honoring our

history, culture and achievements. Tuskegee Airmen were recognized for the example they set for those who wear our uniform today. The event was also an opportunity to promote the establishment of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture on the National Mall.

Original Tuskegee Airmen attending were Sam Rhodes, Howard Baugh, Elmer Jones, James Pryde, Ira O'Neal, Wylie Selden, C.C. Robinson, Walter McCreary, George Watson, and Charles McGee. Louise Mohr, wife of OTA Dean Mohr, was recognized for her work with the Ford Motor Company during WWII, as a prototype of "Rosie the Riveter."

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## New Members

The East Coast Chapter welcomes new members: Lori-Ann S. Ball, Maj. Reginald L. Booker, Dr. James A. Christian, Sharon G. Green, Dr. F. Michael Higginbotham, Tony B. Joe, Lemuel A. Lewie, Maj. Renea T. Lewis, Lt. Col. Audrey J. Lomax, Capt. James F. McCoy, Al Miller, Diane L. Mohr, Shirley R. Patterson, Chailendu K. Pegues, Henry C. Phinazee.

## Kudos to Youth in Aviation



*Left Photo: YIA students with Original Tuskegee Airmen (L-R), John Suggs, Wylie Selden, Hamp Johnson, Bill Broadwater and Woody Crockett. Behind them (L-R), Elmer Jones, Sam Rhodes, Cicero Satterfield, William Wilson, and Ira O'Neal. Right Photo: Nelson Evans and Yvonne McGee.*

At our December General Membership meeting, Nelson Evans and Yvonne McGee were honored for exceptional leadership, loyal dedication and tireless service over the years for their work with the ECCTAI Youth in Aviation Program. Ten of the current students were present.

## Speakers' Bureau "Passing on the Legacy"

Under the leadership of Hank Henry and Byron Morris our Speakers' Bureau remains active throughout the Washington-Baltimore area. Proceeds from these events are donated to the ECCTAI Education Assistance Fund and to ECCTAI's Youth in Aviation Program. Aside from the speaking engagements, on behalf of ECCTAI, Hank Henry delivers donated books and computers to area schools and organizations.



*Loyola College's Dr. Margret Musgrove, director of "Women Studies" (pictured front) invited the ECCTAI Speakers' Bureau to give a Black History Month presentation to a large audience of students, faculty and community guests. (L-R) Hank Henry, William Wilson, Bill Peterson, Dr. Cyril Brown, and Hamp Johnson.*



*National Capitol Park and Planning Commission invited the Speakers' Bureau to give a Black History Month presentation on "Tuskegee Airmen and Black Military Contributions" at Brookside Gardens. Front (L-R): Sam Rhodes, Hamp Johnson, Cicero Satterfield, Sam O'Dennis, Back (L-R) William Wilson, Bill Peterson, unknown audience member, Hank Henry.*

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## ECCTAI LONELY EAGLES

\*Robert L. Higginbotham \*Harold E. Sweeny \*Gertrude Williams

### Lemuel Rodney Custis



Lemuel Rodney Custis, the last surviving member of the first Tuskegee Airmen Flight Class 42-C, passed away on February 24, 2005, in West Hartford, CT. He received full military honors at his funeral, to include a flyover by the CT Air National Guard. The *Hartford Courant's* headlines read "Lemuel Custis Dies; Leader in Black Achievement," and "A Humble Man who Loved his Country."

Custis was assigned to the 99<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, flying 92 combat missions in the P-40, shot down a German Focke-Wulf 190 fighter off the Anzio beachhead, receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism. As stated by Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, Jr. at his funeral, "If he and the four others from that

class had not been successful 63 years ago, the rest of us would never have been airmen." Custis became an advanced flight instructor at Tuskegee and left the US Army Air Force in 1946 as a Captain.

He graduated from Howard University in 1938 and was the first black police officer hired by the City of Hartford before joining the Tuskegee Airmen. He later became the Chief Examiner in the State Sales Tax Division. His achievements were recognized in 2001 by Central Connecticut State University with an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities Degree.

At his funeral, tributes from Tuskegee Airmen, Hartford area friends and co-workers were overwhelming. He left an impressive legacy in his quiet achievements, paving the way for African Americans now in Connecticut's most prominent state and local positions. He was predeceased by his beloved wife, lone.

### Victor Hancock



Victor Leslie Hancock passed away on March 8, 2005 in Washington, DC. He became a member of the Tuskegee Airmen and received his commission and pilot wings at the

US Army Air Corps Flying School in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1945, becoming a B-25 bomber pilot.

Following WWII, Hancock received a B.S. degree in 1950 and a Doctorate of Dental Surgery in 1960, both from Howard University. He practiced dentistry in Washington, DC, from 1960 to 1996 and served as an assistant professor at Howard's College of Dentistry, being instrumental in helping countless numbers of young men and women complete

the process of applying and being accepted into the Dental School. He was awarded for being the "outstanding professor" of the year for multiple years and contributed to many civic and professional organizations in the Washington, DC area.

His extensive interest in science was evident in his publications on Air Cooled Internal Combustion Engines at Tuskegee Army Air Field and other dentistry related publications with the Howard University Press.

He remained devoted to the Tuskegee Airmen throughout his life and was an active member in the East Coast Chapter, TAI. His family took great pride in his professional accomplishments and his warmth as a loving, caring husband, father and friend. He is survived by his loving wife, Elaine.

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## Fundraising

In order to contribute more to the Education Assistance Fund and to support our Youth in Aviation Program, ECCTAI will have to put more effort into fundraising. The following suggestions have come before the Executive Board:

- Sponsor a concert
- Request support from a restaurant to donate a percentage of an evening's receipts toward our community endeavors.

If you have any suggestions, know of a fundraiser who can work with us, or would like to volunteer, please contact Bill Broadwater.

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### 2004-2005 Officers

Taro K. Jones	President
Louise Mohr	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President
Bruce C. Alexander	2nd Vice-President
Walter Jackson, III	Treasurer
Tanya Suggs	Secretary
James R. Coles, Jr.	Parliamentarian
Oliver C. Carter	Immediate Past Pres.

### Directors

George A. Henry
J. Byron Morris
William F. Peterson
Roslyn Marchbanks-Robinson

*The telephone numbers of all members mentioned in this newsletter can be found in the TAI National Directory.*

All Executive Board members can be contacted through email at [officers@ecctai.com](mailto:officers@ecctai.com)

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## From The Editors

Our next issue will feature a collage of ECCTAI activities. Please send us your photos\* of ECCTAI members in action at work and play.

In this issue, as in past issues, we continue to recognize Original Tuskegee Airmen. Please consider submitting your OTA story to perpetuate the legacy and inspire our youth. Your story should be 350 words or less and may include:

- life before your Tuskegee Experience (TE) (dreams, inspirations, personal incidents, education, obstacles), how you got involved in the TE
- life after TE (career, community, family, volunteer service, awards)
- the legacy you want to leave for the next generations
- a photo\*, old or recent.

\*Do not mail old or original photos as photos may get lost/damaged in the mail. Low cost copies of photos can be made at local drug & discount stores while you wait.

If you would like to be included, please contact us. We will be happy to work with you to get your OTA story published in the next ECCTAI Newsletter.

ECCTAI Newsletter Editors,  
Patricia Lightfoot and Roslyn Marchbanks-Robinson

Electronic mail, for many of us, is the fastest and most efficient way to communicate these days. If you would like to give us your e-mail address, please send it to [members@ecctai.com](mailto:members@ecctai.com). Be sure to include your name and address. Your e-mail address will only be used by the ECCTAI Board for Chapter business. It will not be listed in the ECCTAI membership directory.

**ECCTAI e-news**, as a supplement to the Telephone Tree, will be coming out periodically. Currently, we are sending messages to all members whose email addresses we have on file. Those messages will now be sent out as a **blind cc** for security reasons.

**WWW.ECCTAI.COM** our web site is updated with the latest ECCTIA news, check it frequently.



East Coast Chapter  
Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.  
PO Box 62404  
Washington DC 20029-2404

## ECCTAI 2005 Meeting Dates

Here is a copy of the current ECCTAI meeting schedule. You may want to cut this schedule out as a handy reference.

However, Security at Bolling AFB may necessitate changes. As many of you know, security has been heightened at Bolling AFB because the Air Force District of Washington has reactivated and is now located at Bolling to more effectively support the war on terrorism.

<b>Board of Directors</b> Typically, 1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month at 1900 hrs.	<b>General Membership</b> Typically, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday following BOD. Noon
04 May 2005	14 May 2005
01 Jun 2005	11 Jun 2005
06 Jul 2005	16 Jul 2005
<b>No Meetings In August</b>	<b>National Tuskegee Airmen Conference</b>
07 Sep 2005	17 Sep 2005
05 Oct 2005	15 Oct 2005
02 Nov 2005	12 Nov 2005
07 Dec 2005	17 Dec 2005

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING LOCATION

In February, there was discussion about a change in the General Membership Meeting location. If the General Membership Meeting location is changed from the Bolling Officers' Club, all ECCTAI members will be notified by mail. Changes in meeting dates, locations will be also posted on the website.

This newsletter can be accessed at [www.ecctai.com](http://www.ecctai.com), click on the newsletter icon.

Electronic mail, for many of us, is the fastest and most efficient way to communicate these days. If you would like to give us your e-mail address, please send it to [members@ecctai.com](mailto:members@ecctai.com). Be sure to include your name and address. Your e-mail address will only be used by the ECCTAI Board for Chapter business. It will not be listed in the ECCTAI membership directory without your permission.

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WE ARE ON THE WEB  
[WWW.ECCTAI.COM](http://WWW.ECCTAI.COM)

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