

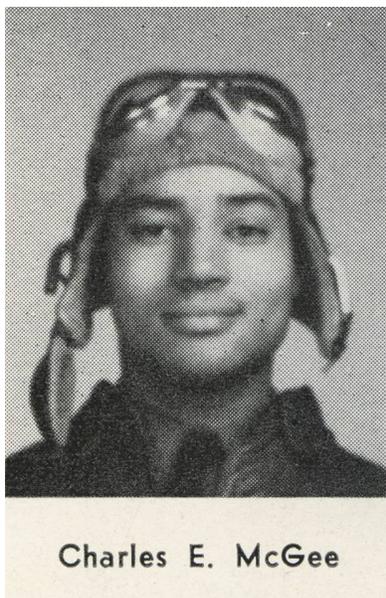
Tuskegee Biography Template

Name of Tuskegee Airmen: _____

Focus Area	Information	Dates	Source
Born (date and location)			
Childhood			
Family			
School			
What role this person had as a Tuskegee Airmen			

Tuskegee Biographies

The biographies below can be used to help students research. It also has a works cited list with additional resources to explore.



Brig. General Charles McGee

General Charles McGee was born on December 7, 1919 in Cleveland, Ohio. He traveled frequently during his childhood years. His father was a minister and the family moved to the states of Ohio, Florida, West Virginia, and Illinois. Acknowledging the value of education, McGee worked hard to save up enough to enroll at the University of Illinois. While in college, he gained an interest in the armed forces through participation in his university's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program. As the United States' participation in World War II gradually approached, Charles decided to move to Chanute Field, Illinois, where he heard that the army was planning to train black soldiers as mechanics for the upcoming black flight program. He applied, passed the examination, and was sent to the Tuskegee Army Airfield in Tuskegee, Alabama to begin his flight training. A year after his graduation from flight school in 1943, McGee was appointed to Second Lieutenant and joined the 332nd Fighter Group, better known as the "Red Tails".

By 1944, McGee completed 136 missions as a Red Tail before heading back home to work temporarily as a twin engine instructor. His service during wartime would not end, as six years later he flew again with the 67th Fighter Bomber Squadron in the Korean War. Three years later, in 1953, Charles graduated from the Air Command and Staff College at the Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. His accolades multiplied, being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1959 and Colonel in 1969. He would fly in a third war, Vietnam, before officially retiring from the Air Force on January 31, 1973. His most notable award was the Congressional Gold Medal, which he received on March 27, 2007 for his work as a Tuskegee Airman. To this day, Brigadier General Charles McGee continues to inspire the next generation of flyers.



Mildred Carter

Mildred Hemmons Carter, was born on September 14, 1921 in Benson, Alabama. Her father was a foreman, and her mother was a postmaster and businesswoman, two impressive feats for the time period. Carter's academic career was equally as impressive as her parents' professional careers, graduating high school and enrolling in college at age 15. As she worked in the office at Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) that oversaw the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP), she took a keen interest in flight. She decided to apply to the program, but her application was denied the first time due to her age (being 17 years old). She was accepted the following year on her second submission attempt. Another accomplishment came in 1941, as Mildred became the first woman in the state to graduate and obtain her pilot's license. Life seemed to be going up for the young aspiring female pilot.

Unfortunately, policies for women flyers took a turn for the worse. A few months later, the government made the decision to ban women from the CPTP, as war was approaching, and only male pilots were needed. Carter continued to fly locally to appease her thirst for flying. On one occasion, Eleanor Roosevelt appeared at Kennedy Field, the airstrip where CPTP students trained, to observe the black pilots in flight. Expecting only men, the First Lady was surprised to see black women like Mildred in flight also. Mrs. Roosevelt then reported back to the president, a report that allowed for black flyers to be considered for air combat in the war. It came as no surprise that only black *male* pilots were considered.

Carter would later marry her husband, Herbert Carter, in 1942 and apply for the Women's Air Service Program (WASP). She would receive a letter saying that the government had no intention of accepting Negro female pilots into WASP. It was not until Mildred turned 70 years old that she finally received her letter of acceptance into the program. Nevertheless, her passion for flying would live on for the rest of her life.



Dr. Vance Marchbanks Jr.

Dr. Vance Marchbanks, Jr. was a United States colonel and medical surgeon born in Fort Washakie, Wyoming on January 12, 1905. During his childhood, Marchbanks' interest in medicine was sparked after receiving an operation when he was 10. He developed a friendship with the surgeon who performed his operation, inspiring him to pursue a pre-med track at the University of Arizona at Tucson. While studying as an undergraduate student, he was not permitted to live in a dormitory because of the color of his skin and was instead forced to find shelter in a nearby boarding house off campus. This discrimination did not deter a young Vance from achieving his goals, and he soon graduated from the University of Arizona, enrolled, and graduated from Howard University's medical school, and performed his residency at Freedman's Hospital in Washington, D.C. His residency would end and his life would change as he accepted a medical staff position at the VA hospital in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Marchbanks' move to the south marked the beginning of his military career. He became a 1st Lieutenant in the Army Medical Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina in 1941, and was deployed to Italy as a flight surgeon in 1944. He was soon promoted to major and effectively centralized medical support into one organization, the Army Air Corps. In 1962, as a member of a NASA team at a tracking station in Kano, Nigeria, he monitored the medical status of astronaut John Glenn aboard Friendship 7 during his Mercury flight into earth orbit. After his tenure with the Army Air Corps, Major Marchbanks pursued a successful career in research: his most notable projects being a new design for an oxygen mask tester, stress tests from individuals experiencing high altitude air travel, and a rating system for astronaut training. His research continued as he published his findings from his study of sickle cell titled "Sickle Cell Trait and the Black Airman." As a result of his study, the military ceased its protocol of discharging African American officers who suffered from this condition. A very accomplished man, Dr. Vance Marchbanks, Jr.'s legacy still lives on today.



Gen. Daniel "Chappie" James

Daniel "Chappie" James was an United States General born in Pensacola, Florida on February 11, 1920. James' family lived near the Pensacola Naval Air Station, where he would watch planes fly above his home and immediately became fascinated with the thought of flying his own plane one day. James did not allow racism to get in the way of his dream of flying. In 1937, James attended the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama where he quickly made a name for himself on campus. As World War II began, Tuskegee sponsored a flight training program and James was able to accomplish his dream of flying an airplane. In July of 1943, James earned his second commission as the Second Lieutenant and became one of the most notable Tuskegee Airmen, the first black pilots of the U.S. Air Corps.

James' monumental feats were not limited to battle, as he also took part in ending segregation in facilities for black and white officers. While in Freeman Field, Indiana with Selfridge Field's 477th Bombardment Group, James and other officers were arrested and charged with mutiny and disobedience of orders after entering a white officers club and refusing to sign a directive that would legitimize segregated and separate facilities for white and black officers. Their refusal resulted in Lt. James and 100 black officers going into custody. He was represented by prominent figures during this case, including future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, future Secretary of Transportation William T. Coleman, and future Mayor of Detroit Coleman Young. This collaborative effort pushed for negotiations with Secretary of War Henry Stinson, who then decided that there would be no separation of military facilities and officers' clubs. The rest of Daniel's career was spent fighting in the war, ultimately earning the rank of General. Daniel "Chappie" James' legacy reminds us that it only takes one person to make a difference.



Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Jr.

Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was a United States General born in Washington, D.C. on December 18th, 1912. He was the son of Benjamin O. Davis Sr., the first African American general in any branch of the U.S. Military. In 1929, Davis attended the University of Chicago, before enrolling in the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. His time at West Point was very unpleasant. He was only spoken to when it involved business and had no friends. He was silenced by cadets and spent every day alone. He made history by becoming the first African American to graduate from West Point and received a commission as the Second Lieutenant at infantry.

In June of 1937, after serving as commander at an infantry company, Davis entered Infantry School. After graduating from the Infantry School, Davis became a professor of military science at the Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University). In May of 1941, Davis entered flying school at a nearby Tuskegee Army Air Base, later earning his pilot wings in March of 1942. Davis's vast military experience and abilities led to swift promotions. His military career spanned three wars and 50 years and marked a number of "firsts." He became the first African American officer in the U.S. Army Air Force and a member of the first African American pilot training class at Tuskegee Army Airfield. Benjamin Davis was a true trailblazer.



CHARLES A. ANDERSON
Group Commander

Charles Alfred Anderson Sr.

Charles Alfred Anderson Sr. was an American aviator and chief instructor of the Tuskegee Airmen. He was also known as “Chief” or the Father of Black Aviation. Anderson was born in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania on February 9, 1907. Anderson’s interest in flying began in his early twenties. He began hanging around white pilots at the airport and learned the mechanics of the plane. He eventually took all the money from his savings, borrowed some additional funds from family and friends, and bought himself a plane. He began teaching himself how to fly and eventually obtained a private license, becoming the first African American to receive an air transport license. In that same year Anderson married his childhood sweetheart Gertrude Nelson. They eventually had two sons, Alfred and Charles.

After obtaining his air transport license in 1932, he captured the attention of the entire world the following year. Anderson and Dr. Albert E. Foresythe, a Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) graduate and practicing surgeon, flew a plane across the entire United States: from Atlantic City to Los Angeles, California. This feat marked the first occurrence by an African American duo. This accomplishment came with more opportunities, as Charles was given the offer to teach at a series of institutions, including Tuskegee Institute and Howard University. While at Tuskegee, he developed a program to teach pilots how to fly, earning the title of Chief Civilian Flight Instructor. Anderson’s passion was exposing the youth to the world of flight, even giving countless personal plane rides to excited children. Following World War II, Anderson promoted aviation education among African American for years to come, ultimately touching the lives of thousands upon thousands of pilots.

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