

MAJ. JAMES HARRISON, USAF RETIRED

Fordyce, Arkansas

1944

- Entered Tuskegee Army Airfield SE (Single Engine) as fighter pilot
- Received one year training in various fields

1945

- Graduated from Pilot Training Class 45-C. Commissioned as 2nd Lt Fighter Pilot at Tuskegee Army Air Field, near Tuskegee Alabama in May. This was not an easy accomplishment. It was the segregated South of WWII. Before all aircraft type upgrades, etc. were completed, the war in Europe was over. Black pilots were told they would be sent to the Pacific Area to fly long-range fighters and began to train accordingly. The pilots knew this was some kind of ploy as the only aircraft of this nature at the time were used in Europe. The drop of the atomic bomb on Japan resolved this "queer" situation.
- Demobilization of the military began
- "Loaned" to the Army Corps of Engineers based upon military bio highlighting college background as an electrical engineering student when drafted

1947

- Arrived in Korea, January
- Subsequently transferred to 24th Infantry Combined Regiment at Gifu, Japan
- President Truman created the US Air Force and all "loaned" personnel were required to return to the new United States Air Force
- Transferred to the 25th Air Force and assigned to the Far East Air Material Command, Tachakawa, Japan
- Moved to a sub base that had only six officers
- Held many titles simultaneously: Mess Officer, Security Officer, Graves Registration Officer, Aircraft Delivery Pilot (for repaired aircraft) Military Police Officer, etc. All workers were Japanese

1949

- Returned to the United States, December 31
- Assigned to Waco Air Force Base, Texas (later changed to James Connolly AFB) as helicopter instructor. Had never operated a helicopter. The commander's response was "That's okay, we will teach you."

James E. Harrison
12-21-09



- Ultimately allowed to stay in fixed wing aircraft as instructor

1953

- Was "volunteered" as B-47 Pilot. Hated the idea (a fighter pilot with six engines?) No one listened.
- Learned navigation and bombing
- Referred to North Africa and other places. Promoted to Major and
- Sent to B-52s ahead of my peer group (no one wanted me?)

1964

- Saw Air Force Times article stating United Airlines was recruiting pilots
- Applied and was hired on with United Airlines
- Retired from military service at Loring AFB, Maine after 21 plus years of service, September 30

"Despite racism, working in an environment controlled by "the good old boys" who did not want to share the service with black folk, I found the career as a pilot a wonderful and exhilarating challenge and enjoyed it very much.

Training at Tuskegee Airfield, Alabama was very vigorous, requiring self motivation. Racial tensions were obvious and number of graduates limited."

Resides in Lakewood, Colorado with wife Margaret