

# Tuskegee ties to Pa. Air Guard bind Black history, military future

By Staff Sgt. Timi Jones | Feb. 10, 2021



(Left) Airman 1st Class Stephen D. Gallway, 270th Engineering Installation Squadron cable antenna technician poses with a photo of his grandfather 1st Lt. James H. Gallway, an original Tuskegee Airmen pilot, on Dec. 6, 2020 in Horsham, Pennsylvania.. His grandfather's legacy motivated his decision to join the Air National Guard. **(Photo by Staff Sgt. Timi Jones)**

(Right) Tech. Sgt. David W. Stevenson of the 201st RED HORSE Squadron, Det. 1, combat arms maintenance and training security forces, poses with a photo of his grandfather, an original Tuskegee Airman, Col. Dudley Wardell Stevenson, 99th Fighter Squadron communications officer on Dec. 6, 2020. Col. Stevenson was one of the first five Tuskegee Airmen officers. **(Photo by Staff Sgt. Timi Jones)**

## **HORSHAM, Pa. —**

Tuskegee Airmen, the legendary first Black U.S. military aviators, are renowned for their remarkable contribution to the country's successes in World War II; work that undeniably led to desegregating the armed forces; and specifically, albeit unknowingly at the time, strengthening the Pennsylvania Air National Guard.

Expected to fail during a time when social winds claimed African Americans as unfit for the job, their abilities and heroism debunked that notion. Completely altering the face of U.S. military, their legacy continues to inspire Black Airmen and servicemembers today, and close to home.

Here, two 111th Attack Wing Airmen – grandsons to original Tuskegee Airmen – joined military service by following the path forged by their grandfathers.

## **Tuskegee, grandfather flags future Airman**

A combat arms maintenance and training security forces member with the 201st Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer Squadron (REDHORSE), Det. 1, Tech. Sgt. David W. Stevenson is the grandson of Col. Dudley Wardell Stevenson, 99th Fighter Squadron communications officer.

“He was one of the first five Tuskegee Airmen officers ever for the 99th Fighter Squadron,” said Stevenson. “He was scheduled to go to flight school, then Pearl Harbor happened, so he was shipped off.”

Though Col. Stevenson passed away when his grandson was only six years old, he left behind a legacy of military servitude.

“He shaped everything unknowingly,” said Stevenson, whose father signaled the patriarch’s influence by enlisting as an Army communications officer.

“Being in the military and serving your country has such a high standard in our family,” said Stevenson. “My sister, who is six years younger than me, joined the Navy.”

While both his father and sister are currently disabled veterans, Stevenson has served and continues to do so. Before enlisting with the 111th ATKW, he devoted 10 years to a Marine Corps career, which included multiple combat tours.

“I figured a good way to close out my career would be to bring it full circle and come back to the Air Force where I could have part in the culture that my grandfather [began],” said Stevenson.

Like many children, he recounts not fully grasping the magnitude of his families’ achievements; but, even as a child, he knew his grandfather was different. He was a Tuskegee Airman.

## **Secret service speaks volumes**

Airman 1st Class Stephen D. Gallwey, 270th Engineering Installation Squadron cable antenna technician, is the grandson of pilot 1st Lt. James H. Gallwey.

Unfortunately, many of the lieutenant’s stories were left untold by the time of his death in 2018. That year, at 17-years old, Gallwey finally discovered his grandfather’s secret past.

“He was a very quiet man and didn’t really want to talk too much about the things he had to experience,” said Gallwey. “He had an office in the upstairs area that no one was allowed to go into. It wasn’t until he passed away that I had the first opportunity to go into this ‘forbidden land.’”

The office, no longer forbidden, laid out the illustrious story of his grandfather’s time in the military as a Tuskegee pilot. Photographs and mementos spoke the story of a young Black man in the throes of seemingly insurmountable obstacles: racism, bigotry and war.

But the story didn’t end with the senior Gallwey.

“I always knew I was going to serve, because I have a very long military history line in my family,” the airman said. “Originally, I wanted to serve in the Coast Guard because it’s the only branch no one in my family has filled, but once my grandfather passed and I found out he was a Tuskegee Airman, I knew I would go with the Air Force.”



"I just wish I could have had the ability to talk to my grandfather, to hear his opinions and get his thoughts..."

Despite the lost conversations, Gallwey holds a sense of pride in his grandfather's historic contributions. He regards it as a driving force in his life.

"That aspect of service that I've wanted to give has been because I want to actively make a difference and not sit under the radar," he said. "I want to make a presence, make a name for myself, as well as continue that name."

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"I make it a point to talk to my kids about our family's history and the importance of serving in the military," said Stevenson. "Whether they choose to serve or not is completely up to them, but they will know our family's history and what it means."

Both airmen are in touch with the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen Inc., an organization dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen.

"Many of the people in our organization are either family members of original Tuskegee Airmen and women, or original Tuskegee Airmen and women," said Melvin Payne, the president of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen. "Philadelphia had the second largest number of persons who went off to World War II through Tuskegee, only second to Chicago."

The GPCTAI offers benefits and opportunities such as scholarships, drone training, grant funding and much more. These initiatives and opportunities have encouraged children to go forward and serve, continuing the work began in 1941 by the few brave Black airmen in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Information can be found on their website at [www.taiphila.org](http://www.taiphila.org)