

THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS IN BLUE VOLUME II



Photos by Staff Sgt. Vernon Young Jr.

DEANIE PARRISH



BIOGRAPHY

Women Air Force Service Pilot (WASP) Deanie Parrish believed that if boys could learn to fly, so could she. During World War II, she convinced an Army Air Corps flight instructor to teach her how. Parrish learned of a new Army Air Forces program to teach women pilots to fly military aircraft. In 1943, she graduated and received her silver Women Air Force Service Pilot (WASP) wings. "The training we received was the same as the boys, except we learned more about cross country flying and they learned more about acrobatics," Parrish said. Her first assignment was as an engineering test pilot in BT-13s and UC-78s. After that she transferred to flying B-26s at Tyndall AFB, Fla., as an air-to-air tow target pilot to train gunners for combat. Parrish continued to fly from Tyndall until the WASPs were disbanded December 20, 1944.

Over the past 15 years, Parrish has been very active in preserving the history and legacy of the WASP. She has traveled to more than 19 states and interviewed over 100 WASP. She co-founded the National WASP WWII Museum at Avenger Field, Texas and the WASP "Fly Girls" traveling exhibit. She was instrumental in convincing Congress to award the WASP the Congressional Gold Medal, and was chosen to receive the medal of behalf of all WASP during a U.S. Capitol ceremony.



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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS

IN BLUE

VOLUME II



Photo by Staff Sgt. Stephany D. Richards

ANTHONY PRESTON

BIOGRAPHY



Technical Sergeant (Ret.) Anthony Preston is a 24-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force. He enlisted in 1982 as a security police entry controller. His career took him around the world to Indian Springs Air Base, Nevada, George Air Force Base, California and Germany. His most memorable moments to date while serving in the military was his award as a Security Forces Airman of the year and being able to give back to his country. Throughout his career and travels, basketball and softball were always two of his favorite pastimes. His love for basketball led him to become the coach of the U.S. Air Force men's basketball team. His passion for sport unfortunately ended his law enforcement career when a softball accident damaged his eye. He then retrained and became the unit training manager for the 388th Maintenance Operations Squadron.

Preston now works as a civilian unit training manager and acquisition development management analyst at Hill Air Force Base, Utah. To keep his sporting spirit alive, he referee's for a little league softball team in his community. While he has retired from the Air Force, Preston still serves his country by helping train today's Airmen to fight today ... and tomorrow.

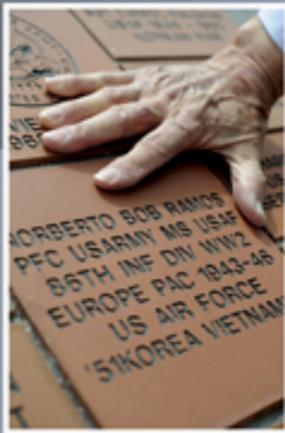
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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS IN BLUE VOLUME II



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Anika K. Williams



NORBERTO RAMOS

BIOGRAPHY

Master Sergeant (Ret.) Norberto Ramos is a World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War veteran. Ramos served in the Army after the draft and later chose to join the Air Force, where he worked in Security Forces. Private First Class Ramos served in the 86th Infantry Division during World War II from 1943 to 1946. Then, in May of 1951, he joined the U.S. Air Force, serving in the American Air Command, the Northeast Air Command and finally in the Southeast Asia-Pacific Air Command. During this time, he also served in support of the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam. He retired in August of 1970, after 20 years of service.

Since retiring, he is actively involved in both the local and military communities in Utah, from volunteering at the base pharmacy at Hill Air Force Base to sitting on committees for local nursing homes. MSgt Ramos is also a member of the VFW, the American Legion and American Veterans. He is also in the Wasatch North Veterans Council where he works toward establishing a Veteran's nursing home in Ogden, Utah.



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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS IN BLUE VOLUME II



Photos by Samuel King, Jr.

WALTER RICHARDSON



BIOGRAPHY

Chief Master Sergeant (Ret.) Walter Richardson said he never forgot the tension in the Tuskegee Airmen's aircraft hangar the day retired Lt. General Benjamin Davis read Executive Order 9981 at Lockbourne Air Force Base, Ohio, in 1949. Those 1,500 deemed worthy to remain in the service would continue to their next assignment as the first African Americans in white units. For that, Chief Richardson calls himself a "second generation" Tuskegee Airman. Ask Chief Richardson how he rose to the top enlisted rank and was recognized as the 1972 Air Force's Outstanding Airman of the Year, and he'll credit Helen, his wife of 58 years.

He retired at Hurlburt Field, and the airmen there know the chief well. He often ministers at the chapel, hosts book signings and accepts volunteer speaking opportunities. As an official member of the Tuskegee Airmen, in 2009, he was a special guest at President Obama's inauguration. Looking back today, Chief Richardson said he did what he had to do – whether it was to fix an aircraft or figure out which water fountain he was allowed to use. Discipline and love were key traits he's held onto since childhood, thanks to his mother and a faith that can withstand any storm.



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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS IN BLUE VOLUME II



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CESAR RODRIGUEZ

BIOGRAPHY

Colonel (Ret.) Cesar Rodriguez served 25 years in the U.S. Air Force, racked up more than 3,100 fighter flight hours, 350 of which were combat hours during Desert Storm and Allied Force. He said his most memorable Air Force experience is, "going into combat and shooting down MiGs. Nothing compares to the adrenaline rush of doing your job. It's the most thrilling and scariest thing I've done." In 1981 he graduated from the Citadel and was commissioned into the Air Force, earning his wings the following year. While advancements in technology push modern air battles beyond visual range, Rodriguez has experienced the fear and vulnerability of being in a MiG radar lock and he has engaged enemy aircraft in battle, and is credited with three air-to-air MiG kills, the most any U.S. military aviator has achieved since the Vietnam War.

In remembering the effect those air battles had on him, he said, "Being in those battles, made me realize how big the Air Force team was that supported me. It's very humbling. My job was probably the easiest. It was everyone else that had a decisive role in the outcome of those battles. And that includes my personal family."

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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS IN BLUE VOLUME II



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Michael R. Holzworth

JACK SCHOFIELD

BIOGRAPHY



Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Jack Schofield is a veteran of World War II and a member of the famous Flying Tigers. He served as a B-25H Mitchell bomber pilot for the United States Army Air Force. Schofield was a member of the 22nd Bomb Squadron, 341st Bomb Group, 14th Air Force based at Yangkai, China. As part of the 14th Air Force Flying Tigers, Schofield and his crew flew combat for allied troops fighting in China. The Flying Tigers were renowned for their flights and bombing runs through enemy fire, over the Himalayan Mountains to deliver supplies and support the ground troops in the China-Burma-India campaign.

Dr. Schofield is a former Nevada State Assemblyman and State Senator. He remains active in the Civil Air Patrol as a lieutenant colonel and serves as the Government Affairs Advisory for the Nevada Wing. Jack and his wife, Alene Earl, recently celebrated their sixty-seventh wedding anniversary. They are the proud parents of six children, they have thirty-two grandchildren, and forty-eight great grandchildren.

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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS IN BLUE VOLUME II



Photos by Staff Sgt. Tim Chacon

CARL SHEPARD

BIOGRAPHY



Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Carl Shepard stands in front of an F-4 Phantom at the Hill Aerospace Museum in Riverdale, Utah May 30, 2011. This specific F-4 is one of several planes Mr. Shepard flew during his Air Force career. He flew F4s, F-100 Super Sabers, A-10 Warhogs and various other models. Mr. Shepard logged more than 3,600 flying hours in fighter jets, including one tour in Vietnam.

He now spends his time volunteering at the Hill Aerospace Museum, located on Hill Air Force Base, Utah, educating visitors on the history of the United States Air Force.

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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS IN BLUE VOLUME II



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BRIAN SHUL

BIOG RAPHY

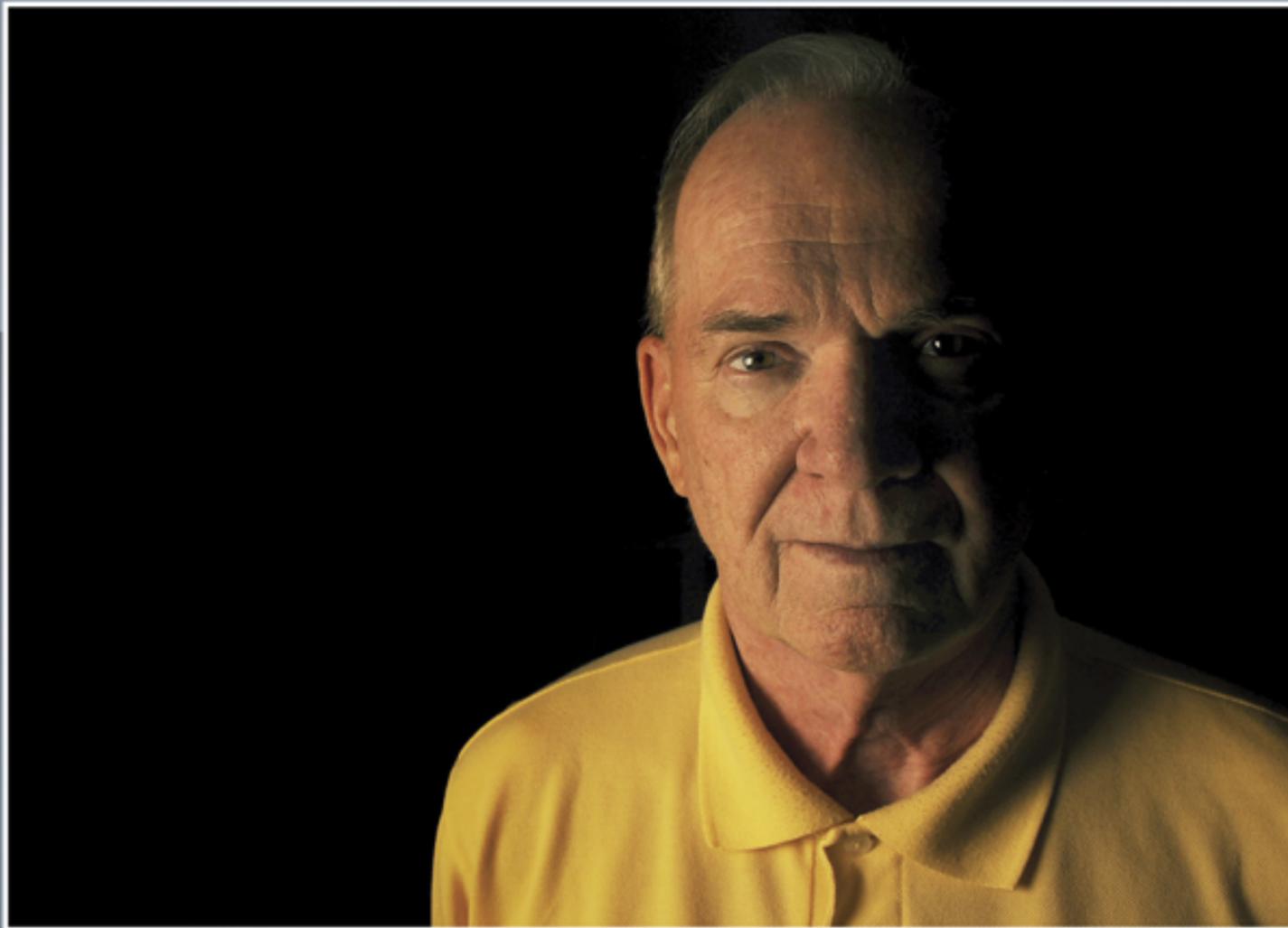
Major (Ret.) Brian Shul is one of the few pilots to fly the Air Force's premier spy plane, the SR-71 Blackbird. During the Vietnam conflict he flew 212 covert, close-air support missions in Laos and Cambodia. "That period of my flying career was a great educational experience," Shul said. "I was there in midst of it...no name, no rank kind of stuff." Then, April 11, 1974, his aircraft was shot down near the Cambodian border and he was severely burned. He spent two months in the hospital and after 15 major surgeries he was told he would never fly again But he didn't accept the diagnosis. Two days after being released from the hospital, Shul passed his flight physical and was returned to active flying duty.

Over the next few years he flew various aircraft before applying to become an SR-71 pilot. His time flying the Blackbird was instrumental during the Libyan crisis in 1986, when he flew three missions providing critical intelligence. Shul retired having flown 12 different military aircraft and 5,000 hours in fighter jets.

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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS IN BLUE VOLUME II



Photos by Senior Airman Tony R. Ritter

BERNARD SMITH



BIOGRAPHY

Master Sergeant (Ret.) Bernard Smith enlisted in the U.S. Air Force shortly after graduating high school in 1958. As soon as the U.S. was getting involved with Vietnam, he was volunteering to go. So the Air Force sent him ... twice. While there he did everything from working on transit aircraft to working in the mortuary because there was a shortage of personnel. "It wasn't the most pleasant job but it was in a way rewarding because if I was laying there somewhere, I would want someone to bring me home," Smith said. After Vietnam, he was assigned to Europe, where he competed on a few Air Force sports teams. He then applied to become a recruiter and headed to Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, where he worked until his retirement in 1981.

Throughout his career, whenever he saw a need he did what he could to help. He was always involved in humanitarian aid, starting up collections for local orphanages, finding random families in the countryside in need and helping repair their homes. "I would get the guys together and we would go out there and repaint and put windows in," he said. "It was like Habitat for Humanity, we were doing it before it was popular. I enjoyed doing that kind of stuff."



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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS IN BLUE VOLUME II



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WILLIAM SMITH



BIOGRAPHY

General (Ret.) William Smith was part of the first group of West Point graduates commissioned into the newly established U.S. Air Force. After pilot training he was assigned to fly the F-84D at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina. Later Smith was assigned to the 49th Fighter Bomber Group at Taegu Air Field, Korea. On Feb. 2, 1952, during his 97th mission, he was struck by anti-aircraft artillery. Flack completely penetrated the cockpit and destroyed his right ankle and foot. Remarkably, Smith piloted his damaged aircraft, landing in the China Sea mud flats. After he was rescued and evacuated, doctors amputated his right foot and ankle. Following nine months in various hospitals and three months at Harvard University, Smith became an instructor and subsequently an associate professor at West Point. Later he reported to the White House as the Air Force staff assistant to Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, the military representative to President Kennedy. When Taylor became Chairman of The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Smith remained on his team, assisting in the U.S. response to the Cuban Missile Crisis. "We all have a chance to do what we can. Some of us are lucky and some of us aren't," Smith said. "But if we do what our talent allows, and bring others along, we will have success and contribute to the safety of this great nation."



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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS IN BLUE VOLUME II



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HARRY STEWART



BIOGRAPHY



Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Harry Stewart is one of the U.S. Air Force's most decorated Tuskegee Airmen. At the age of 17, after voluntarily passing an exam designed to identify potential pilots, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps as an aviation cadet. After completing training at Tuskegee Air Field, Alabama, he went on to complete P-40 and P-47 fighter training and was then stationed overseas with the 332nd Fighter Group. The 332nd members wanted the bomber crews and enemy interceptors to know when they were on station, so they painted the tails of their aircraft bright red, earning the name "Red Tails." On April 1, 1945, Stewart was part of eight red-tailed P-51s flying escort for B-24s en-route to St. Polten. The Red Tails shot down 12 enemy fighters that day, and Stewart personally shot down three ME-109s, earning him the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Stewart received an honorable discharge in 1950 and stayed in the Reserve, continuing to pave the way for African American aviators. "Looking back I have many fond memories of my time in the Air Force," Stewart said. "It's amazing to see how we've all changed ... for the better."

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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS

IN BLUE

VOLUME II



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MARK TILLMAN

BIOGRAPHY

Colonel (Ret.) Mark Tillman was the 12th presidential pilot and commander of the Presidential Airlift Group during the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. He swiftly coordinated and executed the successful evacuation of the President and his staff during the extremely volatile security environment. "Sept. 11 was a day full of unknown threats," he said. "Most of the threats proved to be nothing, but they were still threats at the time." In addition to securely transporting the President on Sept. 11, Tillman is also credited with executing a highly-secretive mission in the most recognizable aircraft in the world, when he transported President Bush to Iraq for Thanksgiving dinner.

He started his Air Force career as a rocket propulsion engineer before being selected for pilot training. He flew the C-130 Hercules in various tactical airlift roles before applying to fly with the 89th Airlift Wing at Andrews AFB, Md. He distinguished himself and his leadership abilities as a pilot for our nation's senior leaders.

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THE USAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

PIONEERS IN BLUE VOLUME II



Photos by Technical Sgt. Christina M. Styer

GRANT WILLIAMS

BIOGRAPHY

Chief Master Sergeant (Ret.) Grant Williams is a documented original "Tuskegee Airman". He was inducted into the U.S. Army in February 1942 and sent to Tuskegee Army Airfield for basic training. He ultimately graduated 35th in his class of 276 students. In January 1944, he was deployed to Italy, where he served until October 1945. He was honorably discharged from the Army Air Corps in November 1945 and immediately enlisted in the Reserve Forces. In August 1950, he was recalled to Active Duty and served for the next 24 years in various assignments, including tours in Japan, Turkey and Vietnam. Mr. Williams retired in June 1975. During his years of service, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and Bronze Star Medal First Oak Leaf Cluster.

In March 2007, he and other documented original Tuskegee Airmen received the Congressional Gold Medal from President George W. Bush. Chief Williams continues to inspire young people with his volunteer work in communities and at schools. He believes that the success of the Tuskegee Airmen and the election of the first Black President will, "Remind younger people that things have not always been open like they are now. You can be anything you want to be."



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