



Freedom's Voice

The Monthly Newsletter of the
Military History Center

112 N. Main ST
Broken Arrow, OK 74012
<http://www.okmhc.org/>



"Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History"

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August 2018

United States Armed Services Day of Observance

Coast Guard Birthday – August 4

POW-MIA Recognition Day

September 15

On Saturday, September 15, the MHC will host a POW-MIA Recognition Day event on the Center's Memorial Flag Plaza, 10-11:00. Please come out and help us recognize and honor these heroes.

Military History Through the Ages

October 13

Details will be in the September newsletter.

Korean War MIA Remains Returned

On July 27, the government of North Korea returned fifty-five boxes containing the remains of United Nations soldiers killed in the Korean War. They also provided general information as to where the remains were recovered. Neither North Korea nor the United States know with certainty whether all the remains are Americans or citizens of one or more of the other sixteen nations whose soldiers and marines served in the Korean War.

Vice-President Mike Pence, whose father served in the Marine Corps in Korea and was a Bronze Star recipient, received the MIA remains at Hickham Field in Pearl Harbor on August 1. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency says that it will take months or even years before all the remains are identified.



Vice President Mike Pence, ADM Phil Davidson, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and RADM Jon Kreitz, Deputy Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, welcome home the Korean War MIAs



USS Oklahoma Sailor Comes Home



Eugene Woodrow Wicker

Eugene Woodrow Wicker was born at Coweta (Wagoner County), Oklahoma, on May 21, 1921, the youngest of nine children of James Newton Wicker and Ida B. (Dover) Wicker. He enlisted in the Navy on November 20, 1940. On December 7, 1941, he was a radioman, Seaman First Class, aboard the USS *Oklahoma* moored in Pearl Harbor. Early in the Pearl Harbor attack, *Oklahoma* was struck by multiple torpedoes and capsized, trapping 429 sailors and marines, including Seaman Wicker, inside the overturned battleship.

Oklahoma was righted in 1943 and the remains removed. By then, most were unidentifiable. The unidentified remains were buried together as unknowns. Beginning in 2015, The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, based in Honolulu, began exhuming the remains in order to attempt to match them with DNA samples provided by relatives. On February 2, 2018, Wicker's remains were positively identified by DNA.

S1 Eugene Woodrow Wicker was buried with full military honors in Fort Gibson National Cemetery – August 4, 2018.



Patriot Guard Riders escort S1 Wicker through Fort Gibson



S1 Wicker arrives at his final resting place at Fort Gibson National Cemetery

"Fair winds and following seas"



Sailors from the Tulsa Navy Operations Support Center carrying S1 Wicker – Tulsa International Airport





LT Charles Wigger Fryer – MIA

Charles Wigger Fryer was born in Oklahoma City on September 1, 1939. He is a graduate of Northwest Classen High School, where he played guard on the football team. He is a 1962 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy.

Lieutenant Fryer, USNR, was a member of Attack Squadron 152 (VA-152), Carrier Air Wing 16, Seventh Fleet, aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Oriskany*. On August 7, 1966, he was the pilot of a Douglas Attack Skyraider A-1H over Nghe An Province, North Vietnam, when his aircraft was disabled by ground fire. He crashed barely over water; his remains were unrecoverable.

LT Fryer's name is inscribed in the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific and on The Wall. He has no special memorial.



Support the Military History Center

We believe the MHC provides a valuable service to the local community, especially to students and veterans, by "Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History". We ask for your financial support to help the MHC continue our ongoing mission of promoting patriotism and recognizing the sacrifices made by our veterans to keep America free.

For more information, please contact the Military History Center at (918) 794-2712 to learn how you can be a financial supporter or click on the link below to go to the MHC website at www.okmhc.org/donate/.

Monetary donations, as well as gifts in kind, are tax deductible, subject to IRS regulations.

World War I Draft Registration Card



Jesse Allen Cook registered for the World War I draft at Tishomingo, Oklahoma, on August 24, 1918. The war ended before he was called-up. Jesse Allen Cook was an uncle of the Editor.

Museum Summer Hours and Admission Fee

Tuesday – Friday: 10:00 – 4:00; Saturday: 10:00 – 3:00
Closed Sunday and Monday and major Federal holidays

Adults – \$5.00
Members and Children under 18 – Free

For more information, call (918) 794-2712

www.okmhc.org



C-5A taking off from Altus AFB, Oklahoma – June 1, 2016

Oil Patch Warriors



Oil Patch Warrior (left) stands in Ardmore, Oklahoma. It's a duplicate of the statue at the right, erected ten years earlier near Nottingham, England.

Cut-off from Middle East oil during World War II, Great Britain relied on oil imports from its colony of Trinidad off the north coast of South America and from the United States. That oil was transported by American tankers, but from January through August 1942, German submarines sank twenty-two percent of the American tanker fleet in the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and north Atlantic. By the summer of 1942, Britain's oil situation was critical. Their stocks had fallen to two million barrels below minimum safety reserves.

Unknown to most people, Britain had a small oil field called Eakring in Sherwood Forest (of Robin Hood fame), but it was producing only a measly 700 barrels per day from fifty shallow wells. In August 1942, Britain's Secretary of Petroleum, Geoffrey Lloyd, called an emergency meeting of the country's Oil Control Board. One of the outcomes of the meeting was the dispatch of a representative to the U.S. Petroleum Administration for War (PAW) in Washington, DC. His mission was to secure American help in expanding the small British oil field. He met Lloyd Noble, President of Noble Drilling Corporation, at Noble's office in Ardmore, Oklahoma. Although Noble was already heavily committed to wartime oil production, he agreed to help. Along with Fain-Porter Drilling Company of Oklahoma City, they agreed to a one-year contract to drill 100 wells in the Eakring field. Noble and Fain-Porter volunteered to execute the contract for cost and expenses only. PAW approved the deal and the contract was signed in early February 1943.

Forty-two volunteers from the two companies, along with four drilling rigs, shipped on four separate ships, and all the equipment needed for the work, sailed for England in March 1943. The ship carrying one of the rigs was sunk by a German submarine, but the rig was quickly replaced.

Four crews worked 12-hour shifts with "National 50" rigs equipped with 87-foot jackknife masts. The American drillers amazed their British counterparts by the speed with which they could drill a well, an average of one a week compared to the British completion of one every five weeks. By the end of their contract in March 1944, the Americans had drilled 109 wells with ninety-four of them producing. British oil production in-

creased ten-fold. By the end of the war, more than 3.5 million barrels of oil had been pumped from England's "unsinkable tanker" oilfield.



The forty-two volunteers from Noble Drilling and Fain-Porter Drilling companies before they embarked for England on the troopship *HMS Queen Elizabeth* in 1943.

With the successful completion of their contract, the oilmen headed for home, all of them except one. Herman Douthit (third from left in the front row of the above photograph) was killed when he fell from a rig mast. He was initially buried in Brookwood American Cemetery, a World War I cemetery in England. After the end of World War II, his remains were disinterred and reburied in the newly constructed World War II Cambridge American Cemetery near Cambridge, England.

Herman Douthit was born on December 29, 1913, at Caddo Mills, Texas. He was an employee of Noble Drilling Corporation. He and his wife were married in Ardmore in 1938.



Herman Douthit – 1943

The story of the Oil Patch Warriors was practically unknown until 1973, when the University of Oklahoma Press published Guy and Grace Woodward's book, *The Secret of Sherwood Forest – Oil Production in England During World War II*. In 1989, a British member of Parliament, Tony Speller, visited Tulsa for a speaking engagement and was given a copy of the book. He immediately determined that the American oil drillers should be memorialized in England. Tulsa sculptor, Jay O'Meilia, was commissioned to create the memorial (shown above). It was placed on the grounds of Dukes Wood Oil Museum near Nottingham, England. In 2001, the citizens of Ardmore decided they needed a hometown memorial. O'Meilia cast another one from his original molds, which still existed.

Ed. Phil Goldfarb discovered this unique story and forwarded the idea to the editor. The material for the article was taken from the Oil & Gas Historical Society website and from other sources.

Tuskegee Airmen

Tuskegee Airmen is the popular name of a group of black Army Air Force pilots who fought in World War II. Officially, their designation was 332nd Fighter Group and 477th Bombardment Group. Tuskegee Airmen also applied to the navigators, bombardiers, gunners, mechanics, instructors, crew chiefs, nurses, cooks, clerks and other support personnel.

Black leaders and their supporters, including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, put great pressure on Congress, the War Department and the President to authorize the training of black volunteers to fly combat aircraft. On April 3, 1939, Congress passed an appropriations bill that included an amendment designating funds for training black pilots. The War Department put the money into funds for civilian flight schools willing to train black Americans. Finally, in 1940, President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order directing the War Department to develop a program to begin training black pilots. Moton Field, near all-black Tuskegee University in Alabama, was selected as the site for pilot training. Additional training was given at Tuskegee Air Field.

On September 11, 1941, the United States Air Force was transformed forever. On that date, the Air Force stood up the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the first all-black unit in the Army Air Force. Other fighter units followed. Later in the war, the Army Air Force undertook training for an all-black bomber group. The men were trained to fly and maintain B-25 Mitchell bombers. They formed the 477th Bombardment Group, but it came too late in the war for combat duty.

The 99th Pursuit Squadron (later the 99th Fighter Squadron) was not only the first black flying squadron, it was the first such to deploy overseas. The 99th was finally considered ready for combat duty in April 1943. It shipped out for North Africa, where it would join the 33rd Fighter Group commanded by Colonel William W. Momyer (a white fighter group). The first combat mission for the 99th was to attack the small strategic volcanic island of Pantelleria in the Mediterranean Sea to clear the sea lanes for the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943. The 99th then moved on to Sicily, where it received a Distinguished Unit Citation for its performance in combat.

By the end of February 1944, more graduates were ready for combat, and the all-black 332nd Fighter Group was formed and sent overseas. The 332nd FG originally included the 100th, 301st and 302nd Fighter Squadrons. The group deployed to Italy in early 1944. In June, the 332nd FG began flying heavy bomber escort missions. In July 1944, the 99th Fighter Squadron was assigned to the 332nd as its fourth squadron.

The 332nd FG was commanded by LTC Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., a 1936 graduate of the United States Military Academy. Davis graduated 35th in a class of 276. He led the 332nd FG to its new base at Ramitelli Airfield near the small town of Campomarino on Italy's Adriatic coast. There, the 332nd FG would provide fighter escort for bombers of Fifteenth Air Force, which conducted strategic bombing raids into Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Italy and Germany. That would be their mission until the end of the war.

By July 1944, all the pilots of the 332nd FG were flying the premiere American fighter of the European Theater, the P-51

Mustang. The pilots had earlier painted the tails of their P-47 Thunderbolts red. They carried on the practice after they were furnished with P-51s. The red airplane tails earned the pilots the nickname – Red Tails.



This P-51 Mustang flown by Commemorative Air Force is painted in the colors and markings of LTC Lee Archer.

By the end of the war, the Tuskegee Airmen had flown 1,578 combat missions – 1,267 for Twelfth Air Force and 311 for Fifteenth Air Force. Of those, 179 were bomber escort missions. They had an excellent record of bomber protection, losing a total of only twenty-seven bombers in seven of 179 missions. This is contrary to the long-running myth, which persists to this day, that the Tuskegee Airmen never lost a bomber to an enemy fighter. Even so, their twenty-seven losses were considerably lower than the average of forty-six for all other Fifteenth Air Force P-51 groups.

The Tuskegee pilots destroyed 112 German aircraft in aerial combat, including three ME-262 jet fighters by Charles Brantley, Earl Lane and Roscoe C. Brown, Jr. over Berlin, all on the same day – March 24, 1945. Tuskegee Airmen also destroyed 150 German aircraft on the ground and damaged an additional 148. They destroyed 950 rail cars, trucks and other motorized vehicles. They even sank a German destroyer entirely by machinegun fire. Over all, the Tuskegee Airmen compiled an impressive record for pilots who were supposed to have been incapable of flying combat aircraft, as many in high places believed at the time.

Nine of the Tuskegee Airmen (pilots) were Oklahomans. (There may have been other Oklahoma Tuskegee Airman, who were not pilots.) The most notable combat pilot of the Oklahoma Tuskegee Airmen was Joseph D. Elsberry of Langston.



2LT Joseph D. Elsberry – 1943

Joseph D. Elsberry was born on April 25, 1921, at Langston, Oklahoma. After attending Langston University, Elsberry graduated from the Tuskegee Army Flying School on September 6, 1942. Elsberry was a very aggressive pilot. He led the flight that sank a German destroyer with 50-caliber machine guns in the harbor of Trieste, Italy, on June 23, 1944. The Germans denied the sinking, but gun camera film proved the feat. He received a Distinguished Flying Cross for shooting down three German aircraft in a single mission on July 12, 1944. He shot down another German eight days later. Elsberry remained in the Air Force, retiring as a Major. He died at San Francisco on March 31, 1985. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Isaac Riddle Woods was born in Oklahoma in 1922 – location unknown. He was a Flight Officer, a rank equivalent to an Army Warrant Officer One. He died in Tulsa in 1968 and is buried in Crown Hill Cemetery in Tulsa. We could find nothing else about him.

Faythe Andrew McGinnis was born at Coalgate, Oklahoma, on August 30, 1917. He died in a training accident at Tuskegee on September 12, 1942. He was a 2nd Lieutenant at the time of his death, indicating he had completed the program and had been commissioned. He is buried in Booker T. Washington Cemetery in Muskogee.

Harold Howard Brown was born at Clearview (Okfuskee County) Oklahoma, on September 19, 1921. He was living in Weleetka, when he entered the Army on September 9, 1942. He also remained in the Air Force after World War II, later serving in Korea and Vietnam. He retired a Lt. Colonel. LTC Brown died at Riverside, California, on February 9, 1999. He is buried in Riverside National Cemetery.

Samuel J. Foreman was born in Tulsa in 1920. He died on January 21, 1945, returning from a bomber escort mission to bomb oil storage facilities near Vienna, Austria. His P-51 Mustang developed engine problems and crashed in northern Yugoslavia. He was declared officially dead on January 2, 1946. His name is on the Wall of the Missing in Florence American Cemetery, Italy.

Flight Officer Robert Cecil Barnwell Smith was born in Oklahoma on June 23, 1925. He enlisted at Tulsa on November 30, 1943, six months after his eighteenth birthday. After the war, he graduated from medical school and established a practice in Muskogee. He died in Muskogee, on October 12, 1992. He is buried in Booker T. Washington Cemetery in Muskogee.

1LT Yancey Williams was born in Louisiana on February 1, 1916 or 1917. (Both dates appear in the records.) By 1930, his family was living in Tulsa. He was a 1st Lieutenant at graduation from flight school, indicating he was a commissioned officer when he entered flight school, as graduates were typically commissioned 2nd Lieutenants or Flight Officers. Flight Officers were enlisted and aviation cadet trainees, who after successfully passing pilot training, were appointed Flight Officers. FO Williams died on October 22, 1953. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

James Bernard Knighten was born in Tulsa on December 11, 1919. He was one of the first twelve Tuskegee graduates to become a pilot in the USAAF. He became a member of the 99th Pursuit Squadron (later Fighter Squadron). Knighten flew his first combat mission on June 9, 1943. He went on to an Air

Force career, serving in Korea and Vietnam. He retired a Lt. Colonel in 1968. After retiring from the Air Force, he had a 20-year career with the Federal Aviation Administration, as an operations inspector in New York and later in Los Angeles.

Knighten was noted as a jokester throughout his military career. He began performing as a stand-up comedian in Las Vegas under the name of Jay Bernard during his years at the FAA in Los Angeles. He moved to Las Vegas after retiring from the FAA and began performing full time.

LTC Knighten died at Las Vegas, on November 9, 2000, the last of the Oklahoma Tuskegee Airman (pilots). He is buried in Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Las Vegas.

James Bernard Knighten (1919-2000), LtCol, USAF (Ret)



2LT James Knighten – 1943



2LT Lincoln Ragsdale – 1945

Lincoln J. Ragsdale was born in Tulsa, on July 27, 1926. His father was a mortician, who owned a funeral home that was destroyed in the 1921 Tulsa race riot. He later relocated his business to Ardmore, where young Lincoln grew up. He graduated from Ardmore's Douglas High School in 1944. After high school, he entered the Army and completed flight training at Tuskegee in 1945. He completed gunnery training at Luke Air Force Base near Phoenix, Arizona, and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in November 1945, after the war was over.

After the war, Ragsdale settled in Phoenix. He established Arizona's first black owned mortuary in 1948. He later graduated from Arizona State University. He went on to earn a PhD in business and became a very successful businessman in Phoenix. Over time, he acquired several other businesses besides his funeral home. In the 1950s and '60s he was a noted civil rights leader in Phoenix.

Lincoln Ragsdale died at his home in Paradise Valley, Arizona, on June 9, 1995. He is buried in Greenwood Memory Lawn Cemetery in Phoenix.

Editor: We could find no photographs of the other Tuskegee Airmen.



99th Fighter Squadron

Women in the Military – World War I

During World War I, 21,480 Army nurses served in military hospitals in the United States and overseas. Three Army nurses were awarded the Silver Star (originally called the Citation Star) in World War I.



Army nurses pose in the surgical dressing room at Base Hospital 27 at Angers, France – 1918

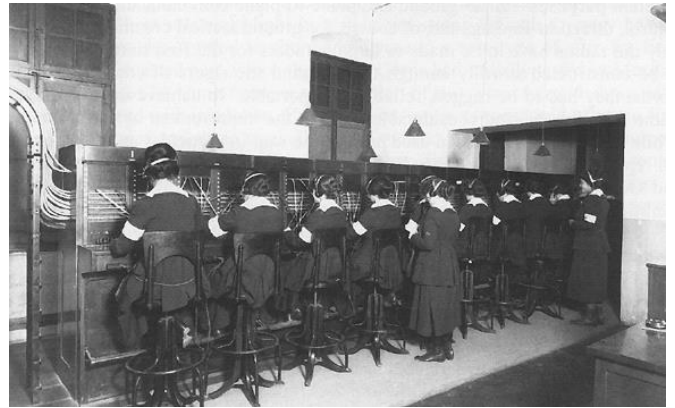
1,476 Navy nurses served in military hospitals stateside and overseas. Two women served with the Coast Guard.



Navy nurses stationed at the U.S. Naval Base Hospital Number 2 at Strathpeffer, Scotland – 1918

More than 400 women military nurses died in the line of duty during World War I. The vast majority of them died from a highly contagious form of influenza known as Spanish flu, which swept through crowded military camps, hospitals and ports of embarkation.

The Army recruited and trained 233 bilingual telephone operators to work at switchboards near the front in France and sent fifty skilled stenographers to France to work with the Quartermaster Corps. The telephone operators were called "Hello Girls". They had to have telephone switchboard experience, speak fluent French, be physically fit and pass a psychological examination.



Hello Girls operating switchboards in a facility near Pershing's headquarters at Chaumont, France – 1918

The Navy enlisted 11,880 women as Yeomen (F) to serve stateside in shore billets to release sailors for sea duty.



U.S. Navy Yeoman (F), also called "yeomanettes", at Mare Island Naval Shipyard, California – 1918

The Marine Corps enlisted 305 Marine Reservists (F) to "free men to fight" by filling positions such as clerks, typists and telephone operators on the home front.



Opha May Johnson, center, the first woman to join the Marines, watches as adjustments are made to her World War I uniform being modeled by PFC Muriel Albert. Ms. Johnson was the 39-year-old wife of an orchestra conductor, when she joined the Marine Corps one hundred years ago this month, on August 13, 1918. She served as a typist at Marine Corps Headquarters.

Bryan Edward Wheeler



Captain Brian Edward Wheeler – 2003
August 9, 1968 – October 22, 2005

During the U.S. Army's first operation in Somalia in 1992, 1LT Wheeler served as a signal officer in the 43rd Engineer Battalion (Heavy), 10th Mountain Division. The following year, he returned to Somalia with the 43rd Engineers.

After completion of his tour at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, where he commanded a company in the 36th Signal Battalion. Wheeler resigned from the regular Army in 1997. He enrolled in the University of Oklahoma Law School, where he graduated with honors in 2000. Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, he joined the U.S. Army Reserve as an officer in the Army's Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps. When he was called to active duty, he was assigned to the G-7 Section (Information and Influence Activities) of an engineer unit for the Iraq invasion. When the armored cavalry arrived in Baghdad on the west side of the Tigris River, and the Marines arrived on the east side, the engineers were called forward because they had portable bridges on tracks. The reconnaissance units felt that the bridges might have been blown so they deployed the engineers forward. As a result, Captain Wheeler became one of the first JAG officers into Baghdad. He spent the next year helping Iraqi lawyers determine which Iraqi citizens had lost property to Saddam Hussein and his sons. Returning from Iraq, he served another year at the U.S. Army's Overseas Transport Headquarters at Winchester, Virginia.

After his last assignment, Captain Wheeler returned home to establish a law practice. He tragically died in a vehicle accident on October 22, 2005. He is buried in Veteran's Section of Memorial Park Cemetery in Tulsa.

The MHC Salutes Veterans of Somalia



United Nations Somalia Service Ribbon

U.S. Coast Guard in World War I



Painting of Coast Guard cutter, USS *Tampa*, sunk off Wales

The day that Congress declared war on Germany, April 6, 1917, the U.S. Navy's communications center in Arlington, Virginia, transmitted the code words "*Plan One, acknowledge*" to all Coast Guard cutters, units and bases initiating the Coast Guard's transfer from the Treasury Department to the Navy and placing the Service on a wartime footing.

During the war, the Coast Guard's responsibilities were convoy escort and coastal defense. The Coast Guard and Lighthouse Service lost almost two hundred men and five ships during the war. The ship losses included two combat losses. One year to the day after the Coast Guard entered the war, the German submarine, *U-140*, sank *Diamond Shoals Lightship No. 71* after her crew transmitted to shore the location of a German submarine, but no lives were lost. On September 26, 1918, *U-91* torpedoed and sank the USCG cutter, *Tampa*, after she had completed her convoy escort duty from Gibraltar to Milford Haven, England. All 131 aboard – four U.S. Navy men, sixteen Royal Navy personnel and 111 Coast Guard officers and men – went down with the ship. It was America's greatest World War I naval loss of life due to combat.

Nearly 9,000 Coast Guard men and two women served in World War I. This number included over 200 Coast Guard officers, many of whom served as warship commanders, troop ship captains, training camp commandants and naval air station commanders. In all, Coast Guard heroes received two Distinguished Service Medals, eight Gold Life-Saving Medals, almost a dozen foreign honors and nearly fifty Navy Crosses.

Since August 4, 1790, the United States Coast Guard has been protecting America from smugglers and pirates, saving lives on the high seas and inland waterways, and in time of war, defending the nation in combat against foreign enemies.



“Lest We Forget”



Brookwood American Cemetery and Memorial – Brookwood, England

Brookwood American Cemetery and Memorial is the only American military cemetery of World War I in the British Isles. It's located approximately twenty-eight miles southwest of London near the village of Brookwood. The small cemetery of four and a half acres contains the graves of 468 American war dead, including the graves of forty unknown servicemen from World War I. Most burials are of men who died of wounds in London hospitals. On the walls within the chapel are inscribed the names of 563 missing, mostly Navy and Coast Guard men who died in British waters and were buried at sea, or in the case of USCG cutter, *Tampa*, went down with their ship.

Freedom is not free.



THANK YOU