

Tuskegee "Red Tail" Fighter Pilot: Calvin J. Spann

Lee Frances Brown

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Dr. Calvin J. Spann shares memories of his full, exciting life, including stories of his service in World War II. Due to the rigid pattern of racial segregation prevailing in the United States at that time, 966 black military aviators were trained at an isolated training complex near Tuskegee, Alabama. Training at this facility became known as the Tuskegee Experiment. Many black fighter pilots trained in Tuskegee fought in the aerial war over North Africa, Sicily, and Europe during World War II. Many people at the time believed that blacks were not capable of operating sophisticated airplane machinery?until these black airmen came home with the Red Star of Yugoslavia, Legions of Merit, and 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses. They were called Schwarze Vogelmenschen (black birdmen) by the Germans and Black Red Tail Angels by the white American bomber crews because of the identifying red paint on their tail assemblies and their reputation for successfully providing fighter escort to bombing missions over strategic targets in Europe. Dr. Calvin J. Spann received his aviator training in the Tuskegee Experiment, serving his country from 1943 to 1946, and helped pave the way for desegregation of the United States armed forces.



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