

## Tuskegee Airmen Supported One Another

### Former Officer Tells Group Of Black Flyers' Successes

NEW YORK — "We had high hopes for one another," Lee Archer, Jr., Vice President of the General Foods Corporation, said recently about life as a "Tuskegee Airman" more than 40 years ago.

Addressing the 12th Annual Luncheon of The Edges Group, Inc., at the New York Hilton Hotel, Archer stated: "We pushed one another forward so that we might all succeed — even when we argued or fought, it was because we all wanted everyone in the group to excel."

The "Tuskegee Airmen," the first Blacks trained to fly by the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II, made history as combat fliers in Europe and many have since gained prominence as both career military men and as civilians.

Archer told the audience that "our entire group at Tuskegee excelled — even our failures were spectacular."

The luncheon chairman and master of ceremonies was Stanley S. Scott, Vice President and Director of Corporate Affairs for Phillip Morris Incorporated. Noting the luncheon theme, "A Salute To The Black Pilots of Major Airlines," Scott said, "today we pay tribute to all the Black men and women who have ever raised their eyes to the sky and said, 'I too will fly.'"

Scott reminded the luncheon guests, including 30 current Black pilots from 14 airlines, of the sobering realities of racial stereotypes of the time. He told of a Tuskegee flyer, a captain, who observed an enlisted man asking a white officer if it was "legal" for a Black to be a captain.

The keynote speaker, Robert L. Crandall, President and Chief Operating Officer, American Airlines, told the group that there would "be more opportunities in the airline industry in the future because we need to use the potential of our workers to the maximum."

He said that Blacks had not always been welcomed as flyers and that "racial prejudice is an ugly blot in the history of aviation." The Edges Group, he said, had "been responsible for some real gains in this area."

Founded in 1969 to facilitate the entry of minorities into positions in both the public and private sectors, Edges is

and Archer received the Edges' "Special Award."

Captain William Norwood, a pilot for United Airlines and President of the Organization of Black Airline Pilots, praised the Black World War II fliers for their pioneering efforts.

"They were before their time," Norwood said, "it was not a timely idea in the 1940s for Blacks to be pilots."



**SALUTE TO BLACK PILOTS** — Four of the principals in the recent Edges Group's 12th Annual Luncheon at the New York Hilton Hotel that honored Black pilots with major airlines were, from left to right, William H. Blakely, Jr., President of Edges; Robert L. Crandall, President and Chief Operating Officer, American Airlines; Lee Archer, Jr., Vice President of General Foods Corp.; and Stanley S. Scott, Vice President and Director of Corporate Affairs, Philip Morris Inc. Crandall and Archer received awards from Edges, an organization that works to increase opportunities for minorities in the public and private sectors of the U.S. economy. Crandall condemned early racism in the aviation industry and said the field currently offered many opportunities for minorities. Archer, a fighter pilot during World War II, told how the famed Tuskegee Airmen had supported one another during difficult times.

an acronym for much of the organization's activities — employment, dissemination of information, group development, economic awareness and solving problems. Its current President is William H. Blakely, Jr., Corporate manager, Employee Relations, Phibro-Salomon, Inc.

Crandall was presented with the Edges' "Ruth Allen King Award," named for the organization's founder,

There are at present some 140 Black commercial pilots flying today with major American airlines. The Organization of Black Airline Pilots conducts summer training programs in Tuskegee, Ala., to instruct youths in the basics of flying and in the development of academic requirements required to become a pilot.

During World War II, the first class of 13 Black aviation cadets began training at Tuskegee in

July, 1941. Before the training at Tuskegee was ended in 1945, 992 American Blacks had "earned their wings."

In all the Tuskegee Airmen flew 15,553 sorties and completed 1,578 missions. Flying as the 332nd Fighter Group, they destroyed 111 enemy aircraft in the air and damaged another 25. On the ground they destroyed 150 enemy airplanes and damaged another 123.

Sixty-six of the American fliers the Germans called "Schwartz Vogelmenschen" or Black Birdmen were killed in combat and another 32 were taken prisoner. The group's 150 decorations included Distinguished Flying Crosses, Legions of Merit, Silver Stars, Purple Hearts, the French Croix De Guerre and the Yugoslavian Red Star.

Some of the Black veterans of Tuskegee include: Charles "Chuck" Williams, Vice President, Schenley Co.; Percy Sutton, Chairman, inner cities Broadcasting Corp.; George L. Brown, Vice President, Grumman Aerospace Corp. and former Lieutenant Governor of Colorado; Jean Esquerre, Corporate

Director, Grumman Aerospace Corp. and Charles Dryden, current President, Atlanta Chapter, Tuskegee Airmen.

Some others are: Clarence Finley, Group Vice President, Burlington Industries; Hannibal Cox, Jr., Manager, Urban Affairs, Eastern

Airlines; Elwood Driver, Retired Vice Chairman, National Transportation Safety Board; Lucius Theus, Retired Major General, USAF and Director Civic Affairs, Allied Corp.; Charles McGee, President, National Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.; Dr. Roscoe Brown.

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