



BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN INC. PUBLIC RELATIONS, P.O. Box 830060
TUSKEGEE, AL 36083

LIEUTENANT WILLIE ASHLEY



Willie Ashley was born on May 23, 1921, in Sumter SC. He graduated from Morris College High School and attended Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia, where he learned to fly in the Civil Air Patrol. On July 3, 1943, he graduated with 12 other cadets from class 42F single-engine from Tuskegee Institute. Cadet Ashley distinguished himself by being the first in his class to fly solo, the first to receive his pilot's wing and the first to earn the gold bars of a Second Lieutenant.

2nd Lt. Ashley flew 77 combat missions in 14 months over North Africa, Sicily, and France. During combat in the southern theater, he shot down two enemy aircraft with a possible third downing of any enemy aircraft. On June 9, 1943, Lt. Ashley was one of a six-fighter flight to engage the enemy in aerial combat. Leading the sortie, was Lt. Charles Dryden, along with Sidney Brooks, Lee Rayford, Leon Roberts, and Spann Watson. Although there were no losses on either side during the mission, the

inexperienced pilots of the 99th fighter squadron proved that they could duel against the Luftwaffe.

After the war, Lt. Ashley served in the US Air Force Reserve. He graduated from the University of Omaha and later earned a Master's Degree in Parasitology from Catholic University along with a doctorate in Philosophy. He held positions in several agencies of the US Government and taught at Howard University. He retired from the Air Force Reserves with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

To honor Lt. Ashley and Lt. Leroy Bowman, another Sumter native, Shaw Air Force Base named a road on base for them. The road, "Ashley-Bowman Boulevard," begins at the Sumter Gate on US 378 and Saint Paul's Church Road and continues on base to Dryden Way. Also, the City of Sumter is planning a memorial for the Tuskegee Airmen with a static display for its Shaw Park.

Lieutenant Colonel Willie Ashley joined the "Lonely Eagles" on February 9, 1984, and is buried at the Arlington National Cemetery.

