



# BIOGRAPHY

DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE  
AIRMAN

## COLONEL EDWARD C. GLEED



Edward “Ed” Creston Gleed, the grandson of former slaves, was born in Lawrence, KS November 5, 1916. He was the second of two sons born to Herbert J.

Sr. and Carrie S. Joseph Gleed. When Ed was eleven, his parents were divorced. His mother moved with Ed and his brother to Tuskegee Institute, AL where she worked as a Home Economics Teacher.

Due to the harsh racial conditions in Alabama, Ed’s Mother sent he and his brother to live with relatives in Denver, CO. Ed later returned to Lawrence, KS and graduated from Lawrence Memorial High School in 1933. His mother was a sibling of six schoolteachers who apparently influenced a young Edward. Consequently, he attended the University of Kansas and earned a B. A.

degree in 1941. He attended Howard School of Law in 1937-1938, and many years later, he earned a Law Degree from Southwestern University in 1976.

Ed registered for the Draft, and by January 1941, he was number three on the list to be called up. About the same time, his mother told him about the “Tuskegee Experiment” in Alabama that was established to determine if Negroes were capable of flying airplanes. He also learned that Lt. Benjamin O. Davis, Jr, a graduate of West Point Military Academy, would be in the first class of aviation cadets. Ed considered all his options and prospects then traveled to Kanas City, MO. On February 7, 1941, he enlisted as a “Buck” Private in the U.S. Army and was promptly assigned to the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. (Horse) Calvary at Fort Riley, KS. All the draftees and enlisted personnel were Negroes commanded by white officers.

Within five months, Ed was promoted on paper to “Acting Corporal,” then later to Sergeant. These promotions, however, were absent the corresponding pay raises! Shortly thereafter, Ed became a qualified horseman, an instructor of recruits, and a Platoon Troop Sergeant. He immediately applied for Aviation Cadet Training and Non-commissioned Office School. In April and May of 1941, Ed was interviewed for an assignment with the Counter-

Intelligence Police Unit of the Military Intelligence Division of the U. S. Army. He worked as an undercover in Washington, D.C. until his orders came assigning him Aviation Cadets at Tuskegee, AL.

Ed had no real difficulty with Primary and Basic training. After just three weeks of the eight-week Advanced Training Course, Ed was selected to fly an exhibition flight in the single engine, single seat combat fighter, the P-39 Bell Airacobra. The flight was successfully completed without incident, and on December 11, 1942, Ed graduated with seven other classmates and was commissioned a 2/Lt in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

On May 12, 1943, Ed married Lucille E. Graves who was from the small town of Horton, KS. They later became the parents of three daughters, Elizabeth, Elaine, and Carol.

Ed completed initial fighter training in the P-40 at Tuskegee and then was assigned to Selfridge, MI for overseas combat training. As the units ramped up, Ed was assigned to command the 302nd Fighter Squadron. His squadron deployed to Naples, Italy in December, 1943 and flew the war-weary P-39s on harbor patrol under the command of Col. B. O. Davis, Jr. Ed was later assigned to the 301<sup>st</sup> Squadron and sent to North Africa to test fly the newly arrived P-51s, P-47s, and P-38s. After two months,

he was recalled to the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group when it moved to Ramitelli, Italy.

The 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group transitioned from the P-39 and P-47 to the P-51. The Group was comprised of the 99<sup>th</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup>, 301<sup>st</sup>, and 302<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Squadrons. The 332<sup>nd</sup> was tasked to fly escorts for the B-17s and B-24s on long range missions over Europe. Within days after rejoining the 332<sup>nd</sup> Ed was credited with three confirmed “kills” of German fighters and two “probables!” He was later assigned by Col. Davis to be the Group Operations Officer and remained in that position until the end of the war in Europe. Ed returned to the states with Col. Davis and joined the 477<sup>th</sup> Composite Group at Godman Field, KY. When WW II ended in the Pacific, Ed was assigned from Group Operations Officer to Base Operations Officer and the group moved to Lockbourne Field, OH. The unit was redesignated the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing and Ed was assigned as Deputy Wing Commander.

Between 1947 to 1949, Ed was involved in the intensive planning at the Pentagon which finally resulted in the new separate service, the U. S. Air Force. The All-Negro units were disbanded, and the remaining personnel were assigned to other units throughout the Air Force. Ed continued at the Pentagon and was promoted to Lt. Col. He subsequently attended Armed Forces Staff College with

follow-on assignments and commands in the Far East and the United States. He was promoted to full Colonel in 1959 and retired from the military in January 1970 after 29 years of honorable service.

His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with Four Oak Leaf Clusters, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, French Croix de Guerre, and ten other decorations.

Col. Edward “Ed” Creston Gleed passed away Jan. 25 in 1990.



*DOTA Edward C. Gleed is listed on page #94 of the “Known Participants” in the Ted Johnson database*