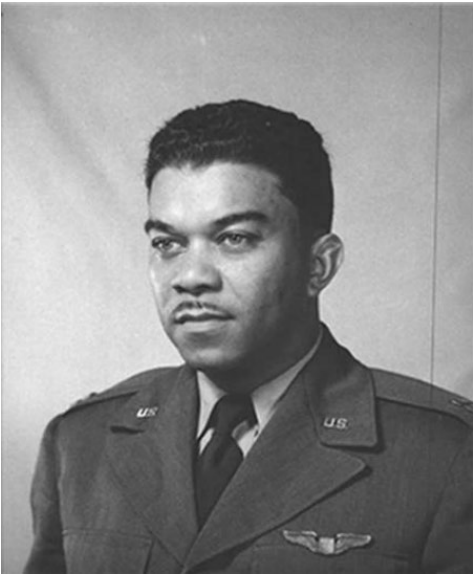


BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

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P.O. BOX 830060, TUSKEGEE, AL 36083



Walter L. McCreary

1918 – 2015

Class 43-C-SE

Unit 100th Fighter Squadron of the 332nd Fighter Group

Walter McCreary's daughter Stephanie McCreary-Lynch likes to joke that her father loved the Air Corps and his P-51 Mustang fighter plane as much as, if not a smidgeon more than, his family. She said, "He named his plane 'Skipper's Darling.'" Curious, she asked him why? He replied, "I was the skipper, and the plane was my darling." Stephanie laughed.

Raised in San Antonio, Texas and the son of a railroad worker, McCreary never felt as comfortable as when he was soaring above the clouds, his family and friends said. "The man was an authentic American hero," said Jack Marchbanks, a music-history reporter and co-host of *Jazz Sunday*, on WCBE (90.5 FM), who also was a 30-year friend of McCreary. "While my heart hurts that he is gone, he's definitely in the pantheon of the sky, with God smiling down on him."

McCreary had graduated from Tuskegee University, in Alabama, in 1940, when he got a draft notice. In 1942, at Tuskegee Air Field, the government began testing the ability of black pilots to fly in combat – a then-radical idea when most were assigned to support companies. McCreary already had a civilian pilot's license and signed up for the Tuskegee Army Air Corps program, becoming one of the first pilots of the all-black 100th Fighter Squadron. The Tuskegee Airmen flew as well as any white pilots, if not better.

Walter McCreary flew 89 missions before his plane was hit by enemy flak on a strafing run over Hungary on October 22, 1944. He bailed out in the Lake Balaton area and was immediately pounced upon by a mob of angry civilians. German soldiers rescued Walter and took him to a prison camp. As the Germans retreated,

Walter was moved from prison to prison until he ended up in Stalag Luft III. He was released from prison when General Patton's 3rd Army captured the city on 29 April 1945.

McCreary flew 89 World War II aerial combat missions in the European Theater. In the 1950s, he flew courier missions to deliver classified messages from Kelly Air Force Base, TX, to the Air Force Security Forces at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.

"His is a story of service and sacrifice that is both remarkable and truly uncommon," said Daniel Fleming, a retired Army colonel who lives next door to McCreary's daughter Stephanie, in Burke, Va., where McCreary also lived for the past 18 years. "Everyone who came in contact with McCreary, immediately admired and respected him," said Fleming, 62, an Athens native who graduated from Ohio University. "There was a greatness about him. McCreary and the other Tuskegee Airmen's sacrifices were not for naught," said Marchbanks, 62, of the Near East Side. "It was a victory over the Nazis and a victory over Jim Crow," he said.

McCreary often said he found it interesting that the Germans, although guilty of lethal prejudice against the Jews, did not practice segregation against the blacks at their prisoner-of-war camps, daughter McCreary-Lynch said.

It wasn't until he and other P O Ws had been freed and they were back in the United States that he was again steered by "colored only" signs, she said.

"He told us he was insulted, but it made him want to pursue a military career even more," McCreary-Lynch, 62, said.

After the war ended, McCreary was among the Tuskegee men sent to Lockbourne Air Force Base (now Rickenbacker). He met his wife, Dorothy, a graduate of East High School and Ohio State University, in 1950. "I remember the social life of a military officer being so busy, with mom in pretty dresses and dad in his uniform," she said.

McCreary retired from the Air Force in 1963 as a lieutenant colonel and then spent 20 years employed as deputy director of the Ohio Department of Finance and, later, Administrative Services. He retired again in 1983 and volunteered at the YMCA East as its bookkeeper until he was 80.

"He had a mathematician's brain," McCreary-Lynch said.

Among his many honors, McCreary was awarded the Air Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross and POW Medal. In 2007, he and other Tuskegee Airmen were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest honor that Congress can give civilians.

He moved to Virginia to live with his daughter's family after Dorothy, his wife of 47 years, died of colon cancer, in 1997. His favorite pastimes included visiting with other retired military members and spending time with his daughter; her husband, David; and their 20-year-old son, Nicolas, McCreary-Lynch said.

"He was an extremely sharp, CNN, History Channel kind of guy until almost the very end," she said.

[Learn more about the 32 captured Tuskegee Airmen POWs.](#)



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McCreary, of Columbus, Ohio, (pictured center in the cockpit with the 332nd Fighter Group) was a prisoner of the Germans for seven months during World War II

Sources:

DailyMail.com

[East Coast Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen Inc.](#)

[The Columbus Dispatch](#)