

BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

Tuskegee Airmen Inc. Public Relations, P.O. Box 830060
Tuskegee, AL 36083

EDWARD MATHEW GIBSON



Edward “Gibby” Gibson was born on July 26, 1922. His fascination with airplanes, which began at a young age, would propel him to become a Tuskegee Airmen. This passion was so strong that he was willing to mow yards all day for a mere fifty cents to buy a model airplane to put together. As Gibson grew older, his education became more expensive, which meant spending less money on his beloved model airplanes. “The tuition was 3.50 cents, and any money I made went toward my education,” said Gibson.

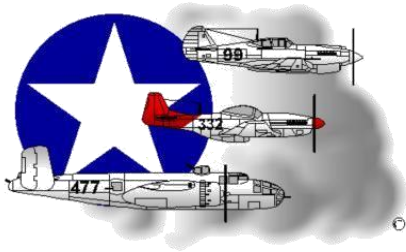
Edward Matthew Gibson was drafted into the Army Air Corps in 1942 and was stationed at Walterboro, South Carolina. Due to his outstanding education and work ethic, he was allowed to take the test to become an officer. After passing the examination, he was sent to aviation cadet training at Keesler Army Airfield in Biloxi, Mississippi. From there, he went to Tuskegee Institute, where he was trained as a bombardier. Gibson stated, “I was so excited when they chose to train at the Tuskegee Institute. It was the most thrilling experience of my life.”

After Gibson completed his bombardier training, he was sent to Midland Field, Texas, to train as an aircraft navigator. At Midlands Field, Gibson received his navigation wings and was commissioned as an officer. “I was so excited to go home and see my family after I was commissioned,” said Gibson, “my family was so proud to see me wearing my aerial gunner uniform, and I was able to show the world that I was an officer in the military for my wonderful country.”

However, when Gibson returned home, he did not receive a warm welcome from everyone. “I was walking down the street, and some white military officer came up to me and asked where I got my uniform.” Said Gibson; I told them I was in the military, but they did not believe me. I was arrested on the spot for impersonating an officer. At that time, I could not believe what was happening. “My mother could not even get me out of jail. “said Gibson. “She had to ask her employer, who was white, to get me out.”

After being released from jail, Gibson went to Godman Field, Fort Knox, Kentucky, where he became a bombardier navigator for the 477th Bombardment Group, 616th Squadron, flying B-25 bombers. While Gibson





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and his crew were training for the invasion of Japan, the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, resulting in the end of World War II. After leaving the Army Air Corps, Gibson went on to join the Army Reserve.

After separating from the Reserve, Gibson and seven other African American men were chosen to take an exam for an apprentice program at the Charleston Naval Shipyard. These were the first African Americans to be accepted into the program. However, their white co-workers once again subjected them to racial discrimination.

Lt. Gibson is in the 2nd row, far right of the picture.

“The instructor at the shipyard wouldn’t help me because of my skin color,” said Gibson. “He would not answer my questions, made life difficult for us, and even used offensive language. This just inspired me to prove him wrong.” Gibson used his military training and the lessons he learned from those less tolerant of others to forge a path for other minorities to follow. Gibson served as the first full-time equal employment counselor at the Charleston Naval Shipyard, handling more than 1000 cases of alleged discrimination. In 1980, he retired from the shipyard after 38 years of service.

Edward “Gibby” Gibson joined the “Lonely Eagle” on July 2, 2012.

