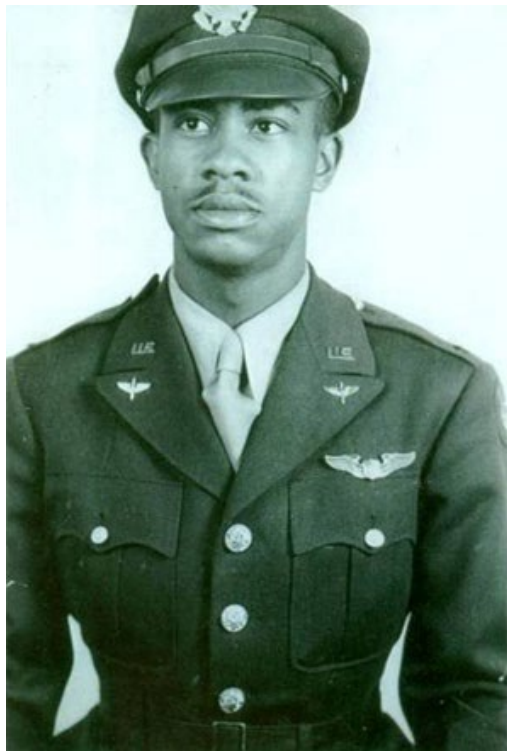


BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

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Tuskegee, AL 36083

JOHN HAMILTON PORTER



Enlisted Service No.: 32834581
Officer Service No.: O-824839

The John H. Porter-First State Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. in Dover, DE is named in honor of the late Major John H. Porter, USAF (Retired, Deceased). Porter graduated from flight training at Tuskegee AAF as a fighter pilot in 1944 and flew over 40 combat missions in Italy. "Skyhawk Johnnie" was as an instructor pilot and operations officer in several Air Force units after the war before serving in his last and longest active-duty assignment at Dover AFB, DE.

Porter was born in Washington, DC on June 18, 1924 to John Francis Porter, a clerk in the Dept. of Agriculture, and Florence Allevia *Brooks* Porter, a school teacher. After the death of his father in 1941 his mother appears to have remarried to a man with the last name Thornton. The family moved to Rochester, NY, where the teenage Porter was the only African American to undergo flight training in the first Civilian Pilot Training Program in Rochester. He then joined the Civil Air Patrol as a pilot and observer before the family relocated to Cleveland, OH.

On March 2, 1943 Porter was inducted into the U.S. Army at Fort Niagara, NY. He was apparently held there until a slot opened up for him in pilot training class 44-B-SE which started primary pilot training in July 1944 at Tuskegee's Moton Field. He completed training at Tuskegee AAF and graduated in class 44-C-SE on March 12, 1944.

Porter underwent combat training at Selfridge Field, MI, and Walterboro AAF, SC. After arriving at the 332nd Fighter Group's base at Ramitelli, Italy in August 1944, he joined the 302nd Fighter Squadron. He moved to the 99th in March 1945 when pilot shortages forced deactivation of the 302nd and its pilots were scattered to beef up the other squadrons. He flew over 40 missions, including a number of bomber escorts. The duration of these missions often resulted in planes returning with just enough fuel for three minutes of flying time. The "Three Minute Egg Club" at right was made up of pilots who successfully landed with that amount (or less) of fuel. At left is 1st Lt. Clarence A. Dart, at right is 2nd Lt. William N. Olsbrook, and in the middle is 2nd Lt. John H. Porter.



At the end of the war Porter briefly left the service as a 1st Lt. before rejoining in February 1948. He was then assigned as a pilot in the 99th Fighter Squadron of what was then the 332nd Fighter Wing at Lockbourne AFB,

OH. The unit had been established in the postwar period as an all-black unit due to ongoing segregation in the U.S. military and the Air Force in particular. However, after President Truman's order in 1948 to desegregate all of the U.S. military services, the Air Force disbanded the 332nd in mid-1949.



After the break-up of the 332nd, Porter's exceptional flying ability greatly contributed to his new position as one of the very few African Americans assigned as basic flight instructors in the newly integrated Air Force. In this role he taught students at several bases, including Williams, Goodfellow, Randolph, Perrin, and Bryan, the last four of which were located in parts of Texas notoriously less welcoming to people of color.

Porter came to Dover AFB, DE in May 1957 as Operations Officer for the 1737th Ferrying Squadron of the 1708th Ferrying Wing. The unit was tasked with delivering mutual assistance-purchased aircraft to NATO air forces in Europe during the 1950s in support of Cold War defense against the Soviet Union. When the 1737th was disbanded in the next year Porter was assigned to the 1607th Operations Squadron of the host 1607th Air Transport Wing at Dover. The unit's primary responsibility was to operate and maintain all facilities and resources dedicated to air operations at this strategic airlift base, including maintaining the airfield itself.

Porter worked as Base Operations Duty Officer for the 1607th until being diagnosed with cancer in 1965 and joining the "Lonely Eagles Chapter" on February 13, 1966, at just 41 years of age. Members of the John H. Porter-First State Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. are justifiably proud of the legacy of Major Porter and are dedicated to continuing the commitment to excellence and service that he exemplified in his all-too-brief life.

