



BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

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MAXWELL HONEMOND



Enlisted Service No.: 33066449
Officer Service No.: Unknown

The Pilots of the 99th Fighter Squadron, and later the 332nd Fighter Group as well as their comrades in the 477th Bomb Group, are justifiably renowned as the first group of Black American Military Aviators. Their trials and tribulations, training programs, combat experiences, and legacy have been researched and widely publicized. Maxwell Honemond was one of another group of African American Pilots of whom almost nothing has been published and very little is generally known: these unsung individuals bravely served as Aerial Field Artillery Observers in the Army Ground Forces.

Maxwell Honemond's path to being a military Pilot started out like many of the future Tuskegee Airmen who took to the skies in the Air Corps and later Army Air Force. He was born on September 20, 1919, and raised in Dickerson, MD, a small town close to the Potomac River in Montgomery County. While pursuing a degree at Delaware State College in Dover, DE, in November 1939, the school became one of six HBCUs that participated in the federally-sponsored Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP). The CPTP was initiated by the Government in the late 1930s as one of several measures to strengthen the nation's defense in response to aggressive actions by Germany, Japan, and Italy at that time. The purpose of the CPTP was to train qualified college students to become Private Pilots. In the event that the country was forced into war, the Air Corps would draw trainees from a pool of individuals possessing the required education and basic flight skills. This action would reduce training time and accelerate the fielding of qualified military Pilots.

Mr. Honemond joined the first class of ten CPTP students at Delaware State that began shortly after the school was formally accepted into the program. After completing the course, the newly-minted Private Pilots were honored in an assembly at the school in which their Certificates were awarded to them. In addition, the faculty awarded each graduate his "Wings" in recognition of his achievement.

At some point before or after his induction into the Army in September 1941, Mr. Honemond applied more than once for admission into the Air Corps Pilot Training Program, but his applications were allegedly "lost". After his induction, he was recommended to the Field Artillery Officer Candidate School at Fort Sill, OK from his station at Fort Huachuca, AZ. Upon entering the school on January 21, 1943, he was one of three African Americans in a class of over 700 soldiers. Mr. Honemond graduated in Class 1943-60 at Fort Sill on April 15, 1943, and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant.

During his assignment to a replacement depot at Fort Sill after being commissioned, 2nd Lt. Honemond was ordered to report to Tuskegee AAF, AL for Flight Training. However, he was not assigned to Tuskegee to learn to fly fighters or B-25 bombers in the renamed Army Air Force. Instead, he was sent there to learn how to fly small low-horsepower aircraft, many of which were variations of then-popular Civilian Piper Cub planes, and function as an Aerial Spotter to direct field artillery fire. These unarmed fabric-covered aircraft were officially known as

Liaison Planes and were typically based with ground forces at improvised grass or dirt airstrips very close to the front lines. An example of the type of aircraft that these Air Observation Pilots flew is provided below. The nature of their operations was to *“fly low and slow with the enemy below”*, as they often flew over unfriendly territory while providing directions to artillery units via radio. The dangers inherent in the missions and resulting high loss rates of Aircraft and Pilots were accepted as necessary to provide effective support to ground operations.

Honemond completed Liaison Pilot training with thirteen other officers in Class 43-CL-3 on December 7, 1943. This was the last of three training classes conducted at Tuskegee for this specialty that graduated 51 pilots, including the members of 43-CL-3. They subsequently went to assignments within the Army Ground Forces. As for Honemond, he was assigned to the all-black 92nd Infantry Division in Italy and flew air observation missions for the division’s 351st Field Artillery Battalion. He remained with the unit until the end of the war and was discharged holding the rank of 1st Lieutenant.



Army veteran Honemond returned to Delaware State College, graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1947, and went on to a long career in secondary school education in the Baltimore, MD area.

Maxwell Honemond joined the “Lonely Eagles Chapter” on March 30, 2006, at 86 years of age and is interred in Arlington National Cemetery with his wife Leilafred.

Source: Biography content provided the John H. Porter 1st State Chapter, Delaware.

