

# SYNOPSIS

*Winner of the Audience Award for Best Documentary Feature at the 2004 Miami International Film Festival*

## **SYNOPSIS 1**

In WWII, the first group of African-Americans to fly for the U.S. military proved themselves equal among their fellow flyers. Overseas they had defeated one enemy. At home, the fight for equality was to be their greatest victory as they blazed the way for Civil Rights.

This 90-minute feature documentary tells the story of the first all-Black fighter squadron that escorted bombers into the European theater during World War II. Named for the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama where they trained, the Tuskegee Airmen were instrumental in bringing about the 1948 Presidential Order that desegregated the armed forces.

The documentary includes vintage footage, photographs, reenactments and first-hand accounts from surviving members of the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group and the 477<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group.

## **SYNOPSIS 2**

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## **SYNOPSIS 3**

They fought an enemy overseas and an enemy at home. They were the Tuskegee Airmen.





# principal crew BIOS

## **JON ANDERSON** writer/director

A native of Miami, Florida, Jon Anderson currently teaches in Orlando at Valencia Community College in their award-winning Film Production Technology Program. Anderson is also a product of Valencia's film program, having graduated in 1992 with fellow classmates and noted filmmakers Gregg Hale (*Blair Witch Project*), Ben Rock (*Meeting Mr. Subian*), Chad Sahley (*When Stand Up Stood Out*) and *Silver Wings* producer/editor David Brame.

In addition to teaching, Anderson works in Central and South Florida as a freelance filmmaker and photographer.

*Silver Wings & Civil Rights: The Fight to Fly* is Jon Anderson's first feature. He was inspired to make his documentary after visiting with one of the original Tuskegee Airmen he befriended in 1998. He was intrigued with the story of the Tuskegee Airmen and set out in 1998 collecting interviews from original airmen, beginning first with airmen living in Florida and then interviewing airmen from around the country. Throughout the interview process, Anderson shot reenactments of the airmen's stories in collaboration with Valencia's Film Production Technology Program.

## **DAVID BRAME** producer/editor

Originally from Albuquerque, New Mexico, David Brame currently lives in the Phoenix, Arizona area where he has his own business specializing in event production services, graphic design, video production/post-production, and digital content creation.

Prior to moving to Phoenix in 2001, Brame lived in Orlando, Florida where he graduated from Valencia Community College's Film Production Technology Program in 1992 together with fellow filmmakers Gregg Hale (*Blair Witch Project*), Ben Rock (*Meeting Mr. Subian*), Chad Sahley (*When Stand Up Stood Out*) and *Silver Wings* writer/director Jon Anderson. In 1999, Brame won a Golden Apple Award of Excellence for Best Educational Film for his short, *Being a Leader of Your Own Life*.

*Silver Wings & Civil Rights: The Fight To Fly* is David Brame's first feature. Former Valencia classmate and friend Jon Anderson shared his dream for the Tuskegee project with Brame early in the stages of production, and Brame eagerly signed on as producer and editor. Hundreds of hours went into the organization and assembly of the final project, hours, Brame says, that paid off in the end with a product both he and Anderson are proud of.



# principal **crew** BIOS

## **KRISTI NEWMAN** music composer/performer

Kristi Newman is a recent graduate of the Music Production Technology/Business program at Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida. She is thrilled to be a part of the *Silver Wings & Civil Rights: The Fight To Fly* documentary through its musical score. She has been writing music since the age of 14 and is actively pursuing a career in songwriting. Newman currently resides in Winter Garden, Florida.

*Since Silver Wings & Civil Rights: The Fight to Fly is a documentary, there is no cast of actors. There are, however, two original Tuskegee Airmen that are featured prominently in the production.*

## **LT. COL. CHARLES "A-TRAIN" DRYDEN (Ret.)**



**Lt. Col. Charles Dryden, the real "A-Train,"** was one of the first black fighter pilots to enter combat in WWII. As part of the original 99th fighter squadron, he fought the German Luftwaffe first-hand over the skies of Europe. When he rotated home, he served as one of the few black combat veteran fighter pilots instructing stateside. Instead of a hero's welcome, he endured a treatment that was worse than the Italian prisoners of war he helped conquer. Dryden represented all that the establishment tried to deny: an African American military aviator and a combat-proven fighter pilot able to command just as well as any other in the U.S Army Air Force.

## **LT. COL. JAMES WARREN (Ret.)**



**Lt. Col. James Warren is a career military** whose personal experience runs the gamut of the Tuskegee experience. He first entered fighter training in Tuskegee and was washed out, or eliminated, from a strict quota system that limited the number of black pilots who graduated from flight training. Since Tuskegee was the only black Army Air Force facility in the nation, Warren was forced to remain there with no chance of promotion. Finally in 1944 he was assigned to the newly formed all-black bomber squadron.

During combat training, he and his fellow Tuskegee Airmen suffered through one of the worst incidents of institutionalized racism when the trainees received less consideration than detained German prisoners of war. In what became known as the Freeman Field Mutiny, Warren and 100 other officers stood up to the racist policies of the local commanding general and risked death as part of a protest against the segregation of the base facilities, a blatant disregard of U.S. Army policy. The 101 officers were arrested and detained for entering the base officers club, and what resulted led to the 1948 presidential order to desegregate the U.S. military.

# DIRECTOR'S notes

## JON TIMOTHY ANDERSON

**The story of the Tuskegee Airmen has inspired me** since I first read about them in the studies of WWII. They were a group of young Americans who flew and fought even though they lived in a country that, at the time, institutionalized racism. Many have heard about the black fighter pilots who never lost a bomber they escorted over fortress Europe, a great feat for any aviator or soldier.

But their greater achievement is lost to many more.

The Tuskegee Airmen actually fought two wars, one that changed the world, and one that helped change our nation. 101 black officers of the 477th bomber group were arrested and considered to be mutinous when they entered a whites-only U.S. Army officer's club in which they were not welcome. The U.S. military was a microcosm of the society at the time, accepting minorities as a whole but denying them personal liberties. In what would later be known as civil disobedience, the men of the bomber group defied the U.S. government and caused a change in the U.S. military when president Truman finally desegregated the Armed forces in 1948.

This true story of one of the first civil rights battles has never fully been told until now. This project is unique in that the entire Tuskegee Airman experience is told first-hand by those who lived it: not only the fighter pilots of the European campaign, but also those who won the battle of will stateside. This project is a tribute to our WWII veterans who freed the world, and to those who lifted the veil of the ignorance of racism.



*Jon Anderson, L, interviews original Tuskegee Airman Mitchell Higginbotham in August, 2003.*