

# Commander's Call Topics



February 5, 2015

*"What happens to a dream deferred?  
Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?"*

Langston Hughes  
American Poet  
(1902-1967)

By Presidential Proclamation  
February is  
[National](#)  
[African American](#)  
[History Month](#)

## A Rich History Provides A Promising Future

"A Century of Black Life, History and Culture" is the 2015 National African American History Month Theme according to the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASAALH), founders of National African American History Month. ASAALH was founded in 1915 and celebrates its centennial this year.

Viewing the collage that is on the AF.mil website, it's evident that the Air Force's African American heritage spans more than a century, even though the Air Force is not quite seven decades old.

[Maj. Gen. Marcelite Harris](#) is a woman of many "firsts"— among them the first female aircraft maintenance officer and one of the first two female air officers commanding at the U.S. Air Force Academy. When Harris retired in 1997, she was the highest ranking female officer in the Air Force and the nation's highest ranking African American woman in the Department of Defense.

The first African American general officer was [Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Jr.](#) (1912-2000), who served first in the Army and subsequently in the Air Force. His years of service (1936-70) include what some call the most significant decades of this country's military history. One of the original Tuskegee Airmen, in July 1942 he was named commander of the first all-black air unit, the 99<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron.

[Gen. Daniel James Jr.](#) (1920-1978) was a 1942 graduate of Tuskegee University who trained pilots for the all-black 99<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron, and did not see combat until the Korean War. He was the first African American to earn the rank of four-star general.

Willa Beatrice Brown (1906-1992) was the first minority woman to earn a commercial pilot's license, and in 1941 she became the federal coordinator of the Chicago unit of the Civil Air Patrol. Her efforts were directly responsible for the creation of the Tuskegee Airmen, training more than 200 students who went on to achieve that designation.

Dr. Guion "Guy" Bluford, Jr. is an engineer, NASA astronaut and the first African American in space (1983). Before becoming an astronaut, Bluford was an Air Force colonel and received both his master's degree and doctorate from the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio.

The Air Force's African American history is rich with accomplishment, but it pales when compared with the Air Force's future.

*Martha J. Lockwood*  
Chief, Information Products AFPRO

### ► TRENDING...

"The FY 2016 President's Budget is rooted in necessity, what we need today to begin the recovery from three years of reduced budgets, and is based on long-term spending," said [Maj. Gen. Jim Martin](#), the Air Force director of budget in presenting [the service's budget request](#).

## ► RESOURCES

Website access to the following resources can be gained by clicking on the name.

[AF.mil](#)

[Airman magazine](#)

[Military OneSource/HomeFront](#)

[Air Force Personnel Center](#)

[Air Reserve Personnel Center](#)

[Department of Defense News](#)

[Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

[TRICARE](#)

[U.S. Government Website](#)

[Air Force Association Scholarships](#)

[Air Force Safety Center](#)

[Civil Service Employment Opportunities](#)

[NAF Employment Opportunities](#)

[Air Force Bands/Outreach](#)

## ► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

**Feb. 5, 1905** - Thomas S. Baldwin took part in a 10-mile race between his dirigible and an automobile. The dirigible and its pilot won by three minutes.

**Feb. 6, 1967** – Airman 2nd Class Duane Hackney, the most decorated Airman in Vietnam, received the Air Force Cross for rescuing a downed pilot near Mu Gia pass, North Vietnam.

**Feb. 7, 1999** - From Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Florida, a Delta II rocket launched carrying the first spacecraft designed to intercept a comet and bring samples back to earth. The spacecraft was named Stardust.

**Feb. 8, 1908** - The Secretary of War approved bids by the Wright brothers, Augustus M. Herring and James F. Scott to build the U.S. Army's first plane.

**Feb. 9, 1972** - The Boeing EC-137D test-bed aircraft for the Air Force's Airborne Warning and Control System made its first flight.

**Feb. 10, 1939** - The North American NA-40 first flew. This was the prototype for the B-25 Mitchell bomber.

**Feb. 11, 1944** - Eighth Air Force conducted a radar bombing attack on important German chemical plants.

## ► CURRENT ISSUES

[Air Force risks becoming too small to succeed under sequestration](#)

Low morale and declined readiness are two of the possible consequences of sequestration cited by [Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III](#) testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

[Air Force presents FY 16 budget request](#)

Strengthening the nation's defense strategy and combatant commander requirements are the hallmarks of the 2016 budget request.

## ► FAMILY HEALTH AND SAFETY

[AF Assistance Fund in full swing](#)

The AF Assistance Fund campaign for 2015 has kicked off as Airmen care for Airmen and help fill the need for housing, financial assistance, nursing care, educational assistance and various base-level community enhancement programs.

[Japanese encephalitis vaccine mandatory for certain PACAF locales](#)

Keeping the force prepared to carry out the Air Force's Pacific Mission the while mitigating the effects of a possibly deadly disease is the reasoning behind making the Japanese encephalitis vaccine mandatory for active-duty Airmen who are either permanently stationed or temporarily assigned for more than 30 days to Japan or South Korea.

## ► PERSONNEL ISSUES

[AF introduces Volume 9 of Portraits in Courage](#)

Honor, valor, devotion and selfless sacrifice in the face of extreme danger to themselves and others are the personal traits exhibited by the five teams and seven individuals who are showcased in Volume 9 of Portraits in Courage.

For more information on Air Force heritage, visit <http://www.airforcehistory.af.mil>

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