

PRESS RELEASE

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Brigadier General McGee Dies

Tuskegee, AL, January 16, 2022.

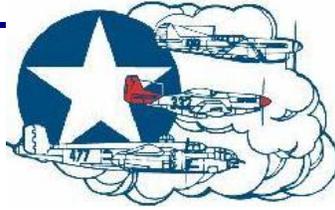


Charles E. McGee died peacefully in his sleep January 16, 2022 at his Bethesda, Maryland home at the age of 102 years old. “He had his right hand over his heart and was smiling serenely” according to his youngest daughter Yvonne McGee. “He was a wonderful human being ... I feel proud and privileged to be called his son, McGee’s son, Ron McGee said.

He was born in Cleveland, Ohio on December 7, 1919. McGee was among eight remaining Tuskegee Airmen combat pilots out of the 355 that were assigned to the 332nd Fighter Group during WWII in Europe. In addition, he flew combat missions in Korea and Vietnam accumulating a total of 6,308 flying hours and a record 409 fighter combat missions during his 30-year active-duty military career.

McGee was a torchbearer consistently emphasizing the significance and lasting legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen on the US military and American society. It was the Tuskegee Airmen he said, that “proved wrong those that believed Blacks were not able to master sophisticated equipment, that Blacks lacked courage, or that Blacks did not have the wherewithal to fight a determined enemy. It was the Tuskegee Airmen that ended up with a stellar WWII aviation war record and thereby edged the military toward integration and America away from segregation.”

On December 6, 2021 – one day before his 102nd birthday, he was able to tour the 99th Flying Training Squadron at Joint Base San Antonio Randolph, Texas to see how the 99th Fighter Squadron, the first Tuskegee Airmen squadron, had evolved. He toured the art, photos, artifacts, the current-day aircraft, and current military aviation technologies. He mentioned “What a pleasure to be here and to be able to see what’s taking place,” McGee said. “I can just say, another blessing in my life, certainly, to be here to celebrate with you ... and also to have a better understanding of what’s taking place now, when we look back at some of the pictures around the room and say, look at what 80 years have done for us.”



Biographical Information:

While studying engineering at the University of Illinois, he enlisted in the US Army October 26, 1942, and earned his pilot's wings June 30, 1943. By February 1944, he was stationed in Italy with the 301st Fighter Squadron of the 332d Fighter Group, flying his first mission on February 14. He flew the Bell P-39Q Airacobra, Republic P-47D Thunderbolt and the North American P-51 Mustang fighter aircraft, escorting Consolidated B-24 Liberator and Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers over Germany, Austria and the Balkans. During missions, he also engaged in low level attacks over enemy airfields and rail yards. On August 23, 1944, McGee while escorting B-17s over Czechoslovakia, he engaged a formation of *Luftwaffe* fighters and downed a Focke Wulf 190.

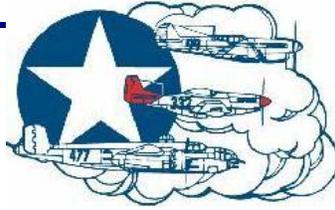
McGee flew a total of 137 combat missions, was promoted to Captain and had returned to the United States on December 1, 1944, to become an instructor on the North American B-25 Mitchell bombers that another unit of the Tuskegee Airmen were working up to deploy to the Pacific Theater. He remained at Tuskegee Army Air Field until 1946, when the base was closed.

After World War II, McGee was sent to Lockbourne Air Field (Columbus, Ohio) to become the base operation and training officer, later in 1948, being posted to an Aircraft Maintenance Technical Course and was assigned to an air refueling unit. When the Korean War broke out, he flew North American P-51 Mustangs (later redesignated by the Air Force as F-51s) again in the 67th Fighter Bomber Squadron, completing 100 missions, and being promoted to major. Continuing his service with the United States Air Force as it was reconstituted, McGee continued to serve as a fighter pilot, flying Lockheed F-80 Shooting Star and Northrop F-89 Scorpion aircraft. During the Vietnam War, as a Lieutenant Colonel, McGee flew 172 combat missions in a McDonnell RF-4 photoreconnaissance aircraft. His plane was hit by enemy fire twice - during the Korean conflict and again years later near Laos - both times on his right wing.

After a series of other appointments both in the United States as well as in Italy and Germany, and promotion to Colonel, McGee retired on January 31, 1973. He ended his military career with 6,308 flying hours. After his military service, McGee held many prestigious functional and honorary positions around the field of aviation. In 1978, at the age of 58, he completed the college degree at Columbia College in Kansas City, over thirty years after his initial enrollment at the University of Illinois. Though interrupted by World War II, attaining a college degree had been a lifelong goal.

McGee served as the Director of the Kansas City airport and as a member of the Aviation Advisory Commission. **For over 30 years, he has been an ambassador of the Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated (TAI), giving numerous public addresses and has received accolades including the National Aeronautical Associations "Elder Statesman of Aviation." McGee served two terms as National President of TAI.**

Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated sm



In 2005, McGee was part of a group of former Tuskegee Airmen, who flew to Balad, Iraq, to speak to active duty airmen serving in the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, the latest incarnation of the 332nd Fighter Group.

McGee was recognized for his combat and military service with a number of awards including: Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Legion of Merit with one Oak Leaf Cluster, Bronze Star, Air Medal with 25 Oak Leaf Clusters, Army Commendation Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Korean Presidential Unit Citation, Hellenic Republic World War II Commemorative Medal along with related campaign and service ribbons.

In 2007, President George Bush awarded the Tuskegee Airmen, including McGee, the Congressional Gold Medal. In 2011, he was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, Ohio. He also served as a consultant to the 2012 George Lucas film, Red Tails.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, approved the honorary promotion of Documented Original Tuskegee Airman, United States Air Force Colonel (retired) Charles E. McGee, to Brigadier General.

General McGee and his late wife, the former Frances E. Nelson of Champaign, Illinois, reared three children, became grandparents of ten and great grandparents of many more.



The nose art is a tribute to his wife he nicknamed "Kitten"



Photos of McGee in active-duty uniform and in his TAI Red Coat.