

Harold Brown tells students of his service as a Tuskegee Airman

[Daniel Carson](#), Fremont News-Messenger Published 2:02 p.m. ET Nov. 5, 2019

WWII fighter pilot's unit protected U.S. bombers in Europe

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Tuskegee Airman Harold Brown speaks to Fremont Middle School History Club and Fremont Ross High School African American Heritage Club students as part of the presentation, "Keep Your Airspeed Up: The Story of a Tuskegee Airman." (Photo: Daniel Carson/The News-Messenger)

FREMONT - At 95, Harold Brown is still passionate about telling the public about the Tuskegee Airmen and the history of one of World War II's most inspiring stories.

Brown, one of the last surviving Tuskegee Airmen pilots and an Ottawa County resident, spoke to students from the Fremont Middle School History Club and Fremont Ross High School African American Heritage Club Monday.

He answered questions from students and staff following a video presentation, "Keep Your Airspeed Up: The Story of a Tuskegee Airman."

Brown was a Tuskegee Airman, a member of a select group of African-American fighter pilots that broke down barriers and played a significant role in President Harry S. Truman's decision to desegregate the U.S. Armed Forces in 1948.

"We were the best kept secret. Nobody had heard of us," Brown said of the airmen, who have become more well-known in recent decades.

With the Tuskegee Airmen, [Brown was a member of the 332nd Fighter Group](#). The fighter group protected bombers with the 15th Air Force, and was one of six fighter groups charged with escorting the bombers into Germany, Austria and southern Europe.

Brown's first combat mission took place June 6, 1944.

He told the Fremont students he was 16 and a junior in high school in Minneapolis when he saved up \$35 for his first flying lessons.

"When my mother found out how I spent my money, she almost went berserk," Brown joked.

Brown was 17 when he graduated from high school in 1942, something he said was not uncommon at that time.

He spoke to students about his experiences as a prisoner of war and how a village constable saved his life from an angry mob after Brown crashed his P-51 in early 1945.

Brown also talked about his experiences in a desegregated military, post-1948, and a segregated society.

Former Terra State Community College President Marsha Bordner, Brown's wife and [collaborator on the book](#) "Keep Your Airspeed Up: The Story of A Tuskegee Airman," accompanied Brown to Fremont Middle School for Monday's presentation.

Bordner said Brown continues to make public appearances and would be honored by the University of Findlay on Veterans Day with an honorary doctorate.

She told students about the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to Northern cities, and how Brown's parents moved to Minneapolis from Alabama.

Brown's parents and their willingness to take a risk with the move served as a model for the Tuskegee Airman as he decided to apply for flight school following his high school graduation.

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Tuskegee Airman Retired Lt. Colonel Dr. Harold Brown shows Cameron Gillum features of the Red Tail airplane on exhibit during a field trip to the Liberty Aviation Museum and documentary "Rise Above." (Photo: Submitted)