The Red Tail Report
News about the Air and Space Forces Association
Volume 16 Number 3 | Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136 | July thru September 2026

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Members joined together for a pre-meeting dinner in Elevation 89 in the Ocala Airport terminal on Sept. 17 to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Air Force. It followed the National Convention in Washington, D.C., where the Air Force's 80 years were noted big time. At home in Florida, we enjoyed each other's company and listened to anecdotes from our secretary, Chappie Kitchens, who attended the national convention in person, and Bruce Gillett, who attended virtually. Thanks to both for representing us so well.

We had lots to celebrate! Earlier in July at the Florida State Convention in Jacksonville, **Bruce was named the Florida Member of the Year**, a remarkable and deserving recognition for his work advocating aerospace power, both in legislation and through our Florida Members of Congress. (See more on page 4.) **Chappie was called forward to receive the Red Tail Chapter Member of the Year Award** for his work as chapter secretary and chapter, state and national chaplain. In those capacities, Chappie and his wife, Sherri, (also an AFA member) are frequently in the Washington, D.C. area on AFA business. (Chappie, you need to know, is a former Air Force Chief of Chaplains.)

Back to the national convention, the Red Tails received three national awards. **Chappie and Steve Hughes each earned a Medal of Merit.** Chappie for the work noted above, and Steve for his work in producing three successful annual golf tournaments. Together they netted nearly $12,000 for wounded airmen and guardians. Plus, they provided recreational enjoyment for all involved. Finally, **thanks to efforts by Terry Dickensheet, the chapter received the national AFA Education Achievement Award**. It recognizes sustained excellence in the execution of aerospace education programs, such as Teacher of the Year. The Red Tail Memorial Chapter's name repeatedly looks great on the bright and shiny national convention handout page that lists awards. We can be proud!

Talk at monthly chapter meetings at some point always comes back to membership. The chapter on Sept. 26 has 826 mission and prime members. Our goal is to encourage more members to become active – that is attending meetings and getting involved in activities. That is one reason why we are holding our October meeting in Gainesville instead of Ocala. Specifically, we are meeting at 6 p.m. Oct. 15 in Air and Space Forces ROTC facilities, Van Fleet Hall on Stadium Road, on the University of Florida campus in Gainesville. In The Villages, two members are searching for a location where we can gather for a February meeting.

We've got lots of talent, imagination and energy in this chapter. The chapter leadership's goal is to tap that energy for the good of the Air & Space Forces Association. Educate! Advocate! and Support!

Thank you and AIM HIGH!

Ben Langer

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The Air Force & Space Forces Association Mission

1. Educate the public about the critical role of Aerospace power in the defense of our nation.
2. Advocate Aerospace power and strong national defense.
3. Support the United States Air Force, United States Space Force, their families, and Aerospace Education.

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AFA AIR & SPACE FORCES ASSOCIATION

It's a Fact: Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136 draws members from eight counties, Citrus, Alachua, Marion, Sumter, Dixie, Levy and parts of Lake and Putnam. It is not necessary to be an Air Force veteran to join.

The Red Tail Report is a quarterly newsletter Published by the Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136 of the Air & Space Forces Association, 4005 N Hatchet Cir, Lecanto, FL 34465, Ben Langer, President, Rob Price, Editor. The Red Tail Report is distributed Quarterly electronically and upon request on paper via USPS.

VETERAN BOOT CAMP

Veteran Boot Camp – An unclassified intelligence briefing revealing all of the great veteran and civilian benefits available to veterans and their families in Ocala and Marion County.

A Veteran Boot Camp is held every 4th Saturday from 9 – 11 AM at the Elliott Center, 3231 SW 34th Avenue, Ocala, FL.

Lots of important information for whether you are new to Florida or have been living here a long time. This is your chance to learn the ins and outs of Ocala and Marion County and the great benefits of living here - both as a veteran and a resident.

All of your **What When Where and How** questions will be answered and the many free veteran benefits explained. Spouses should attend – the available family benefits are part of the information. Many are hard to find, and most are free!

Veteran Boot Camp is presented by the Vet Resource Center, Inc., a 501(c)(3) charity working for our vets.

352-433-7290
VeteranBootCamp.org
info@VeteranBootCamp.org

VETERAN HELP INFORMATION

Veteran Helping Veterans, USA and Mission 1776 can be reached at the following website: www.mission1776.org

Veterans Helping Veterans USA supports Marion County Veterans and their families as they navigate life beyond military service by providing direct assistance, personalized guidance, and community-based support that restores stability, dignity, and purpose, so they are not left to face life's challenges alone.

Make a tax deductible donation to Veterans Helping Veterans USA. Your financial support will help ensure we continue to provide social services to those who wrote a blank check to the United States of America and now need help. Donate now at https://vhvusa.org/donate-today .

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136 salutes its Community Partners. The Air & Space Forces Association enjoys a warm relationship with the following businesses through its Community Partners Program. Please support these local businesses.

OCF Ocala International Airport
1770 SW 60th Ave Suite 600
Ocala, FL 34474
352-629-8377



UNIQUE AUTO REPAIR
3171 SW 143rd Place Rd, Ocala, FL 34473 (352) 245-6976

2026 AFA State Convention Activities



The annual Florida Air & Space Association convention was held in Jacksonville July 17-19, 2026.

President Ben Langer, Vice President Bruce Gillett and Secretary Chappie Kitchens attended.

The primary purpose of the convention was a business meeting. It set the budget for FY2026-2027, elected state officers to take up their positions on Oct. 1 and gave candidates for national offices a window to stake out their positions. There also was plenty of time for members to socialize, as envisioned by Jimmy Doolittle, an AFA founder.

(From the top, counterclockwise) Florida State President Mike Liquori (left) presented Chappie Kitchens the Red Tail Chapter 136 Chapter Member of the Year Award; Chapter Vice President Bruce Gillett, the AFA Florida Member of the Year Award for exceptional and dedicated service to AFA Florida; and Jennifer Cook, regional science fair director and educator in the Okaloosa County School System, the State Teacher of the Year Award. At dinner, U.S. Congressman John Rutherford (FL-5) presented a strong case for defense.







VISIT OUR WEBPAGE: REDTAIL.AFA.ORG





Many of our members of the Red Tail Memorial Chapter received awards at the National Convention. The members are as follows:

Aerospace Education Achievement Award

Ben Langer, President

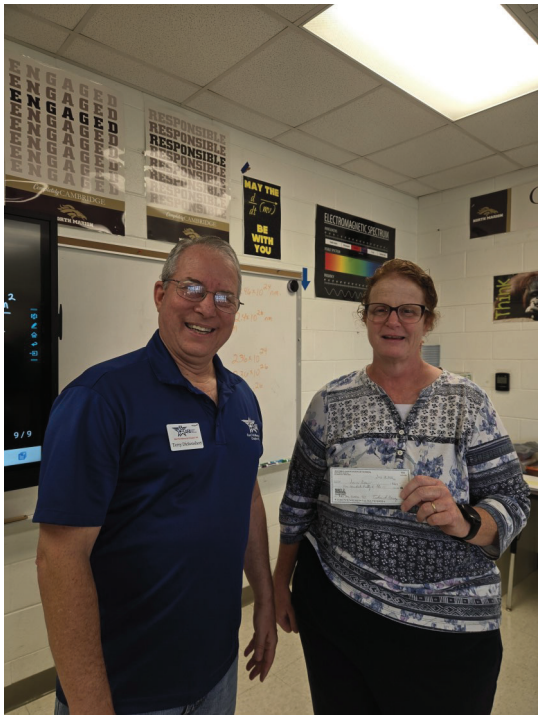
Medal of Merit—Florida Region

Steven Hughes

Randall Kitchens

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TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Terry Dickensheet presents check to Teacher of the Year Judith Rickett (North Marion High School).

OUR MISSION CAME TO LIFE AT ASC 2026



As thousands gathered for the Air & Space Forces Association's Air, Space & Cyber Conference 2026. Cadets sat across from senior Air Force and Space Force leaders for a full hour of face-to-face Q&A, hosted by the Doolittle Leadership Center, questions about strategy, service, and the decisions that define a career. The focus on mentorship continued as we presented the Thompson-Mallett National Teacher of the Year award to an educator whose hands-on approach to aerospace STEM changed what her students believed was possible. Elsewhere on the conference floor, the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies brought together military, industry, and policy leaders to make the case for a modern, ready Air Force and Space Force.

WHAT PLANES DID THE RED TAIL SQUADRON FLY DURING WORLD WAR II?

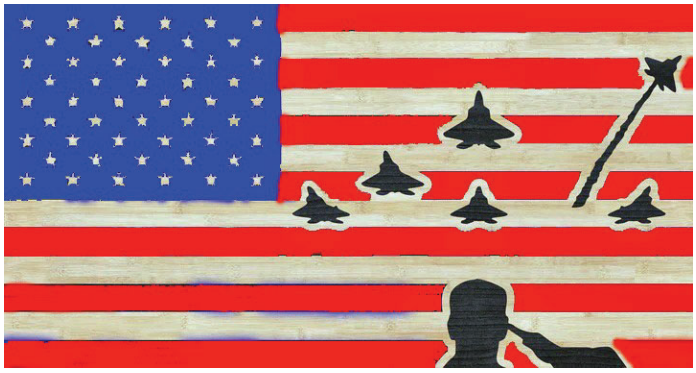
The 332nd Fighter Group (known as the Red Tail Angels or the Red Tails or the Tuskegee Airmen) was formed early in 1941. They first flew the Curtis P-40 Warhawk. Later they flew the Bell P-39 Air Cobra. The next aircraft is what defined the Red Tail Squadron. When they received the first variation of the P-47 Thunderbolt which was painted green (I believe the P47-D20) ; the pilots decided to paint the tails red. This tradition continued on with the next P47 Thunderbolt which was painted silver (I believe the P47-D22). Then through the rest of the war the most well known of their planes; the P51-B, P51-C and the P51-D



HOW TO DOWNLOAD SAMPLE ELECTION BALLOT IN MARION COUNTY

www.votemarion.gov/326/View-My-Sample-Ballot

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LAST FLIGHT

Col Lindsey Graham 07/12/26



1. **What was the nickname the 1960 Convair B-58 was Known by?**
2. **What was the nickname the Northorp T-58 was Known by?**

NEW MEMBERS

Brandon Magnuson	Ashleigh Buchanam
Noel Padilla	Jesus Gebreil Cardona-DeJesus
Stuart J Whitmore	Quinn Achilles Carrasquilla
David W. Duffell	Thomas Douidy
James E. Echlin	John Garrison
James Strange	Matthew Grow
Joe Spaventa	Rory Hughes
John Garrison	Sherri Kitchens
Philip E. Steeves	Michael J Mowbray
Robert W. Francis	Om Patel
Stanley A. Kjekstad	Fabian Rodriquez
Brian Bailey	Nilka Sinicrope
Matthew Alvarez	Robert A. Swing

1. Hustler
2. Talon



1900 HOURS

Ocala Airport Terminal Conference Room

(Unless Indicated)

October 15, 2026

1800 Hours

AFROTC Building: Van Fleet Hall

2074 Stadium Rd, Gainesville

November 19, 2026

December 17, 2026

Subject to Change

UPCOMING EVENTS

Veterans Radio Show	Every Saturday 11 AM—12 Noon	WITG Radio FM 104.7 MHz
Air Show—Kennedy Space Center	November 7-8, 2026	Live Event
Wings Over Ocala –Air Show	April 30—May 2, 2027	Live Event
Patriot Games	Tentatively, Florida. June, 2027	Live Event



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