



Brigadier General Charles McGee Oldest Member of the Famed Tuskegee Airmen

Brigadier General Charles McGee was a retired fighter pilot who was one of the Tuskegee Airmen and a career officer in the U.S. Air Force for 30 years who flew a total of 409 combat missions in World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

After enlisting in the U.S. Army on October 26, 1942, he became a part of the Tuskegee Airmen having earned his pilot's wings, and graduating from Class 43-F on June 30, 1943. Promoted to Captain, McGee had flown a total of 137 combat missions, and had returned to the US on December 1, 1944, to become an instructor on the North American B-25 Mitchell bombers that the 477th Bomb Group (Medium), another unit of the Tuskegee Airmen (based at Godman AAF, in Kentucky, and later at Freeman AAF, in Indiana). He remained at Tuskegee Army Air Field until 1946, when the base was closed.

After World War II, McGee was sent to Lockbourne Army Air Field (now Rickenbacker ANGB, Columbus, Ohio) to become the base operations 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 P-51 Mustangs again in the 67th Fighter Bomber Squadron, completing 100 missions, and was promoted to major.

During the Vietnam War, as a Lt. Colonel, McGee flew 172 combat missions in a McDonnell RF-4 photo-reconnaissance aircraft. In a 30-year active service career, he achieved a three-war fighter mission total of 409 combat missions, one of the highest by any Air Force fighter pilot. After a series of other appointments both in the U.S. 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. In July, 2019 Senator Van Hollen introduced legislation to authorize Col. McGee's promotion which was then passed unanimously by the full Senate. Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Anthony Brown also pushed to include their provision with the House and Senate National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). In December, Senator Van Hollen announced the successful inclusion of the provision with the NDAA and the legislation was then passed by both the House and the Senate. On December 20, 2019 it was signed into law by President Trump. The President pinned the Brigadier General star on February 4, 2020.

McGee has been 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, Congressional Gold Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Korean Presidential Unit Citation, Hellenic Republic World War II Commemorative Medal along with related campaign and service ribbons. He was a member of the National Aviation Hall of Fame.

On February 28, 2022, Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich was joined by Montgomery County Councilmember Will Jawando, Montgomery County Public Libraries Director Anita Vassallo, the Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs, the Tuskegee Airmen, members of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, family members of Brig. Gen. Charles E. McGee, and others in ceremony to sign an executive order that enables the County to rename the Silver Spring Library to the "Brigadier General Charles E. McGee Library."

McGee passed away on January 16, 2022 in Bethesda, Maryland. He was 102 years old.