

Palazzo honors local Tuskegee Airman

Congressman Steven Palazzo (R-MS), recently hosted a ceremony officially recognizing Tuskegee Airman and Hattiesburg resident, Cpl. Needham Jones, Sr., at the Lake Terrace Convention Center in Hattiesburg. Palazzo presented Corporal Jones with a Congressional Gold Medal and certificate in the first official ceremony recognizing his service as a Tuskegee Airman.

As the first African American airmen, the Tuskegee Airmen faced extraordinary obstacles and discrimination during World War II. The Airmen's exemplary service played a significant role in prompting the Air Force to become the first service branch to begin integrating its ranks in 1949.

When asked to share his thoughts on The Tuskegee Airmen and his long-overdue recognition, Corporal Jones stated: "I am honored to be included with such a courageous group of trailblazers. I believe you should strive to be the best that you can in whatever you do. It takes all parts of a wheel to make it turn. No matter how small you think your part in the great scheme of things, do it well."

Jones was called up in the draft just six weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

As a student at Alcorn A & M College, he was allowed to complete the spring semester as a member of the reserves and reported to the Air Corps at Camp Shelby, Mississippi on Sept. 7, 1942.

After eight days of testing, he was sent to Maxwell Air Force Base in Tuskegee, Ala., and became a member of the 99th Pursuit Squadron. He served in the Motor Pool and Ground support, keeping the Tuskegee Airmen's famous Red Tails in the air.



Congressman Steven Palazzo (MS-4), presents Cpl. Needham Jones, Sr., with a Congressional Gold Medal at a ceremony in Hattiesburg, in recognition of his service as a Tuskegee Airmen.



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