



## Evergreen Aviation Museum

The Captain Michael King Smith Educational Institute

*For more information please contact Nicole Wahlberg, Director of Marketing and Public Relations, Evergreen Aviation Museum, 503-434-4006 or email [nicole.wahlberg@sprucegoose.org](mailto:nicole.wahlberg@sprucegoose.org).*

### **FOR RELEASE**

February 15, 2005

## **A Celebration of Black History**

*Evergreen Aviation Museum celebrates the patriotic contributions African-Americans during Black History Month.*

**MCMINNVILLE, Ore.** – Sat, Feb. 19, 2005 - In honor of Black History month, the Evergreen Aviation Museum is recognizing the patriotic service of African-Americans with a series of special activities throughout the day.

The celebration will begin at 11:00 a.m. with a children's story time featuring a picture book about the Tuskegee Airmen – African-Americans who served the nation as military pilots, flight engineers, gunners, mechanics, navigators and bombardiers. Noted lecturer, Ron Weber, will present "African Americans in Defense of Their Nation" at 1:00 p.m. The celebration will conclude with a presentation by keynote speaker, Tuskegee Airman and Author, Luther Smith from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Luther Smith is a retired U.S. Air Force Captain who flew 133 combat missions in World War II. Smith received his military aviation training at Tuskegee Army Field, Alabama at age 22. He was a fighter pilot in World War II in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Air Forces in 1944, with the all-black 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group. He flew P-39 *Aircobra*, P-47 *Thunderbolt* and P-51 *Mustang* fighter aircraft in combat. He is credited with destroying two German enemy aircraft in aerial combat and 10 German aircraft in ground strafing missions. Smith was permanently injured on his 133<sup>rd</sup> combat mission as a result of parachuting while unconscious from his burning P-51 *Mustang* in 1944. He was rescued and taken prisoner by German soldiers. He spent the remainder of the war in the hospital as a prisoner of war. Captain Smith was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with six Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple Heart, eight European and Mediterranean Theaters Campaign Ribbons and the Prisoner of War Medal. He has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Iowa and a Master of Science degree from Penn State University. Following his military service he worked as an engineer at General Electric. He is author of a book titled *Accepting the Challenge, A Tuskegee Airman Story* about his experiences as a Tuskegee Airman and the impact those experiences had on his life. Smith and his wife live in Villanova, Pennsylvania.

Activities scheduled for Feb. 19:

11:00 a.m.

Children's Story Time in the museum's *Flight Zone* education area. The story will be read by Jasmine Zamora.

*Story time will feature a children's picture book on the Tuskegee Airmen titled "The Tuskegee Airmen Story."*

1:00 p.m.

Ron Weber presentation titled "African Americans in Defense of Their Nation" in the museum theater.

*Weber researches, writes and speaks on Black History. He lectures for government agencies each year, writes weekly and monthly columns in newspapers throughout Oregon and is currently writing some television documentaries on exceptional African Americans. He has received several national awards on Martin Luther King, Black History Month and Women's History Month.*

2:00-4:00 p.m.

Luther Smith presentation titled "Accepting the Challenge, A Tuskegee Airman Story" at the P-51 *Mustang*.

*Tuskegee Airman and Author of "Accepting the Challenge, A Tuskegee Airman Story". He will speak about his experiences becoming a Tuskegee Airman and the impact the experience had on his life.*

For more information on the events or to attend, please contact the Evergreen Aviation Museum Events Department at 503-434-4023.

The Evergreen Aviation Museum is best known as the home of the world's largest wooden airplane, the *Spruce Goose*, SR-71 *Blackbird* and Grumman F6F-3 *Hellcat*. In addition, there are more than 60 historic aircraft and exhibits on display, along with artwork, traveling displays, the newly remodeled Spruce Goose Café and the museum store. The Evergreen Aviation Museum's hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., daily except when it is closed for Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, New Year's Day and Easter. The Museum is located at 500 NE Captain Michael King Smith Way, across the highway from the McMinnville Airport and about three miles southeast of McMinnville, Ore., on Highway 18. Regular visitor admission is required. Call (503) 434-4180 for more information, and visit [www.sprucegoose.org](http://www.sprucegoose.org).

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