

# THE INFO AGE MARCONIGRAPH

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## December 8, 1941 at Camp Evans

**Fred Carl, Director**

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First Lieutenant Harold Zahl had one burning worry. “Had our early-warning radar failed?” He was a physicist and for years, under great secrecy, he was part of a group working to prevent such a surprise attack. How could the Japanese Empire achieve complete surprise? After a Japanese flyer radioed the now famous Tora-Tora-Tora, two thousand Americans were killed and the American Pacific fleet was heavily damaged. Six of America’s best early warning radar sets, each capable of detecting bombers 150 miles away, had been sent to the Hawaiian Islands to protect the Navy Base.

“If our radar had not given warning because of break down, or just ineffectiveness, surely part of the finger of blame would point at our group.”

Colonel Blair, Harold Zahl and the visionaries of Fort Monmouth realized at the close of WWI that the next war would not come from the sea, but from the air. The days in which America was protected by the vastness of the oceans were ending. As aircraft technology improved, they would be able to reach America. A way had to be found to detect enemy aircraft and send planes to destroy the attackers.

The development work was difficult. There was no funding. Command did not realize the advances in aircraft development would accelerate. Also, the electronics industry was new, and components were not available for this unique challenge. After working for many years at Fort Monmouth, the work was moved to isolated Sandy Hook. German spies were suspected of observing the work at main post.

Everything had to be developed from scratch. Harold Zahl even hand made the first 100 special radar tubes he designed for the new radar sets. Had one of his tubes failed?

For days there was no word of what had gone wrong in Hawaii. Harold Zahl waited for “the damning words which might say that our new early-warning system had not worked and the Japanese had sneaked in while Signal Corps electronics had failed in its great hour of test and crisis.”

Finally, a call from Washington from Rodger B. Colton would bring an end to the worry. The new radar had worked!

Harold Zahl and the radar engineers were elated, “we cheered, vigorously shook hands and slapped backs.” Two Signalmen, Joe Lockard and George Elliott, operating a SCR-270 radar set, had seen the Japanese planes approaching as early as 7:02 A.M. They checked their equipment. They had not seen such a large signal before. At 7:20 A.M. they telephoned the sighting to the Information Center. The information was not acted upon and the first bombs fell at 7:55 A.M. Over fifty minutes were lost to prepare to meet the enemy with guns ready. Victory could have been taken from the attackers and American ships protected. A Japanese flyer would not have yelled Tora-Tora-Tora.

The worry that the new radar had failed was over and unfounded. If the enemy can attack Hawaii would they now attack the Panama Canal, Washington or the West Coast? Camp Evans personnel were sent immediately to make sure the Panama Canal and other key locations were protected. Months before the Pearl Harbor attack the radar group even relocated their laboratory from Sandy Hook to the old Marconi Wireless Station in Wall to be safe from Nazi submarine attacks.

The war years would bring many challenges. The radar sets sent to Hawaii would be improved and updated to meet enemy jamming and to work with new weapon systems. The next generation radar sets were in development. The Camp Evans engineers were working with MIT to get the prototype ready to meet battle conditions the very week the Japanese attacked. The radar would be called upon to help destroy a new Nazi weapon later used in Europe, the V-2 rocket.

At the end of the war the secret radar was given as a “major reason of victory”. The radar visionaries who realized radar was needed long before a war arrived now saw the new threat for America, the rocket. Just as at the end of WWI the plane had limited abilities, at the end of WWII rocket technology was just beginning. Rockets could reach beyond the ionosphere and radar could not. In 1945 rockets could not cross the oceans, but the day would come when they could, carrying the new atomic bomb. Just as after WWI the Camp Evans radar engineers did not wait for orders and began preparing to protect America with advanced technology.



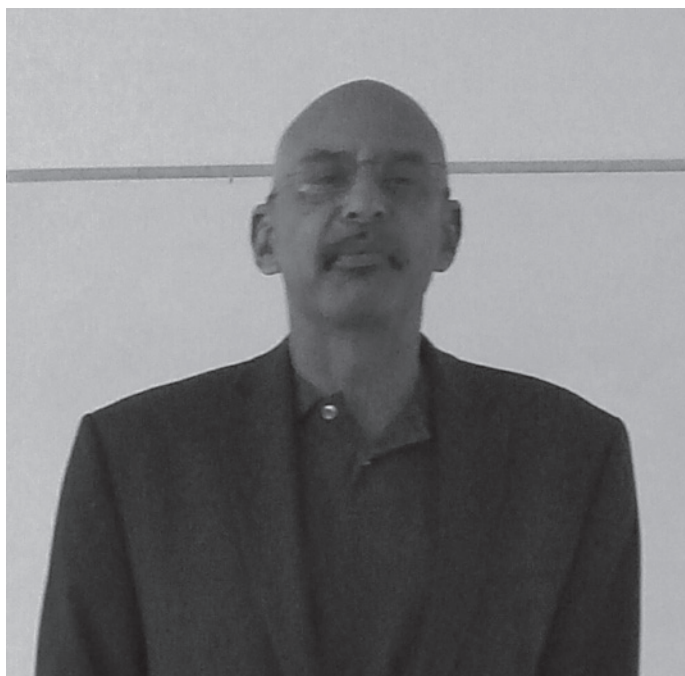
# The Real Story of the Tuskegee Airman

## AOC Garden State Chapter Lunch and Learn Presented at InfoAge at the former Camp Evans

**John T. Cervini**

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On November 16, 2016, approximately fifty five AOC members and guests were treated to an outstanding presentation by Mr. Weyman Watson, the son of a Tuskegee airman. The audience was treated to a lively briefing that included many facts, previously unknown to most people, and a slew of interesting posters and photographs.



Mr. Weyman Watson

This event was a wonderful opportunity for the AOC GSC to educate the public about what the Association of Old Crows is, and how the Garden State Chapter works to network with Government and Industry, and perform many beneficial undertakings through its Community Awareness committee. It was also a great introduction to InfoAge for quite a few in the audience.

Mr. Watson emphasized the great achievements that these men, despite the obstacles and prejudices of the times. Before, during, after World War II, “negroes” were still subject to the “Jim Crow” laws of legal segregation and discrimination. The Tuskegee Airmen had to fight racial discrimination, both within and outside the military. It was assumed by many that Negroes couldn’t fly even simple aircraft, and that the realities of life in Alabama would make them quit. Despite these adversities and with the odds deliberately stacked against them, they trained, flew and fought with great distinction.



Courtesy of Mr. Weyman Watson





AOC members and guests in attendance at the presentation by Mr. Weyman Watson, the son of a Tuskegee airman.

How did it all come about? First of all, prominent negro civil rights leaders led a very public argument, underneath the threatening clouds of war, about military opportunities for negroes. Fearing bad PR and civil unrest in the face of World War, the political establishment, the War Department and the Army relented. In 1941, the U.S. Army authorized the first all-black Army flying unit, the now legendary the 99th Fighter Squadron to be trained at Tuskegee, Alabama.

A black engineering company, McKessick & McKessick, was selected to build a segregated base outside Tuskegee. The base was completed in six months, ahead of schedule. Except for a handful of white instructors, the entire cadre of trainees, support troops and civilian employees were black.



Courtesy of Mr. Weyman Watson

Advanced fighter pilot training was conducted in the AT-6 and P-40, the Army's front line fighter of the day. By late '42 enough pilots were graduated to form the 99th Fighter Squadron and soon thereafter, the 332nd Fighter Group. After further resistance and delays by the Army, the 99th deployed to North Africa in April 1943. They began flying combat missions there, in Sicily and over mainland Italy.

The three squadrons of the 332nd arrived in Italy in January, 1944, flying Bell P-39 Airacobras, later P-47 Thunderbolts, and finally converting to P-51 Mustangs in the summer of '44, when the 99th merged to the 332nd. The 332nd

Fighter Group painted the empennages (tails) of their P-47s and later, their P-51s, red; the nickname "Red Tails" was coined. American (white) Bomber crews, appreciative of the 332nd's bomber escort skills, anointed them the "Red-Tailed Angels". Their bomber escort record unmatched by any other Army Air Corps/USAF Wing!

Mr. Watson also presented many facts that most people are not aware of. For instance, The Tuskegee Airmen stood up against racism, unequal treatment and segregation overseas and at home, at the risks of their careers, and even their lives. Also, many were very active in post-war civil rights movements, working with leaders like Martin Luther King, and took national leadership roles themselves. Of over 550 original fighter pilots, only 18 survive today.

After a well-deserved standing ovation, Mr. Watson received a copy of "Camp Evans the Untold Story" from Acting director Myles Murphy and program chairman, John Cervini.



Tuskegee Diorama by Bob Perricelli

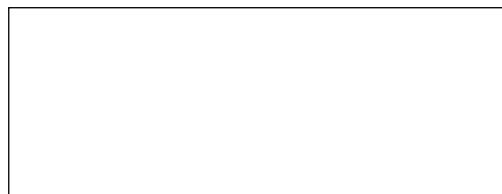


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## Save The Dates

### **Space Flight Lecture Series**

Last Sunday of each month.  
2300 Marconi Road, Wall

### **Women's History Month**

Camp Evans "Techno" Rosies  
March 18, 2PM  
2201 Marconi Road, Wall

### **VCF East**

March 31-April 2  
2201 Marconi Road, Wall

### **NJHDA Shipwreck Symposium**

April 29, 8PM  
2201 Marconi Road, Wall

### **Veterans Appreciation Day**

May 20, Noon to 8PM  
2201 Marconi Road, Wall

*For more information about these events, such as admission costs and times,  
call 732-280-3000 or visit us online at [www.infoage.org](http://www.infoage.org).*

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