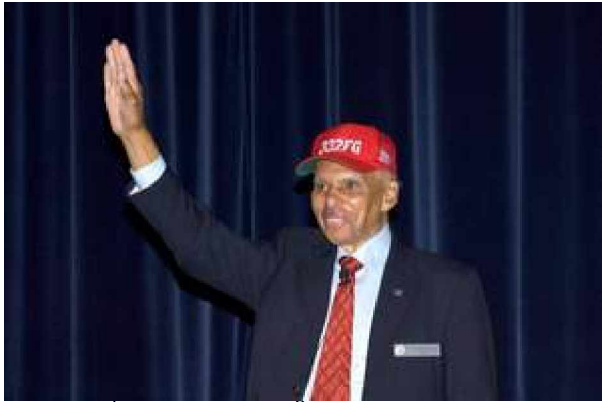




Gathering of Eagles

Annual event allows students to learn from aviation legends

By Carl Bergquist Air University Public Affairs



Staff College students, Roscoe Brown bids farewell to the audience June 6. Mr. Brown was one of 14 aviation legends invited by ACSC officials to mentor future Air Force leaders at this year's Gathering of Eagles.

-- Air Force photo by Melanie Rodgers

A P-51 Mustang pilot who flew 68 missions with the Tuskegee Airmen during WWII, Roscoe Brown said GOE is "clearly a teaching experience." Mr. Brown was also an Eagle in 2004.

"Hearing about what I and other Tuskegee Airmen did is a lesson in how society has changed," he said. "I took my first airplane ride in Alexandria, Va., when I was 10 years old, but my father had to pass me off as the child of an African diplomat to get the pilot to take me up. Not too many years later, I was an Army Air Corps fighter pilot."

Mr. Brown said leadership is as much a state of mind as it is action. He said whenever he was in a leadership position, he practiced LEO, or leadership, excellence and opportunity.

"The leadership was more the quality of my leadership, excellence referred to excellence in what we did, and opportunity stood for opportunity for all," he said. "Always remember that leadership has to be creative, fair and compassionate."

During WWII, Mr. Brown was one of the 15th Air Force pilots who shot down a German ME-262 jet fighter, and he also took out a German marked P-51 Mustang the Germans had captured, repainted and sent back to attack Allied Forces. He related the downing of the P-51 to the ability of a good officer to make quick decisions in the heat of battle.

"When I got a shot at the P-51, I was low on fuel, and I had to make a decision to either go after the plane and possibly not make it back to base, or forget the aircraft and return to base. I decided to go after him," he told ACSC students. "Be vigilant in that as officers, every one of you will have to make decisions during your career."

Kenneth Dahlberg

Kenneth Dahlberg was shot down three times during World War II and eventually taken prisoner by the Germans. He is also a triple-ace.

"A teacher once told me, 'You'll never know everything, but that shouldn't stop you from trying,'" Mr. Dahlberg said. "It helps to be lucky in life, but it also helps to keep your antenna up."

He said his teacher's message always kept him ahead of everyone else, and that led to a lot of curiosity and many challenges. It was partially responsible for his success in his military and civilian lives.

On the subject of leadership, Mr. Dahlberg said one must “get out in front.”

“You can tell a leader by how many people follow him,” he said. “But, trust is the most important element of leadership. People will follow those they trust.”

Ken Rowe

Ken Rowe did not begin his military career in this country. He was once a North Korean air force lieutenant.

On Sept. 21, 1953, flew his Mig-15 aircraft across the border to South Korea, and he surrendered to American troops. He said he wished he had been born in the United States, and his message to ACSC officers was simple.

“Stay in the military and become a general. Generals are important people,” he told them. “When I was young, I had a lot of ambition. I wanted to be a general, I wanted to be a U.S. citizen and I wanted to see all 50 U.S. states. Well, I have seen all 50 states and I’m a U.S. citizen, but I never made it to general.”

Retired Brig. Gen. Heinie Aderholt

Born and raised in Alabama, retired Brig. Gen. Heinie Aderholt said his childhood in the South helped him be a better military officer.

“I came to Maxwell in 1946 to command the 563rd Squadron F, an all black unit,” Mr. Aderholt said. “That turned out to be the greatest job I ever had in the military, and those men turned out to be the best Airmen I ever had.”

He said the 563rd was segregated from the rest of the base, so he built his own mess hall, theater and clubs. His advice to ACSC students was to learn from past events.

“It’s heartbreaking that we haven’t learned anything from the past,” Mr. Aderholt advised. “That is why, for the future of the Air Force, you need to start thinking out-of-the-box.”