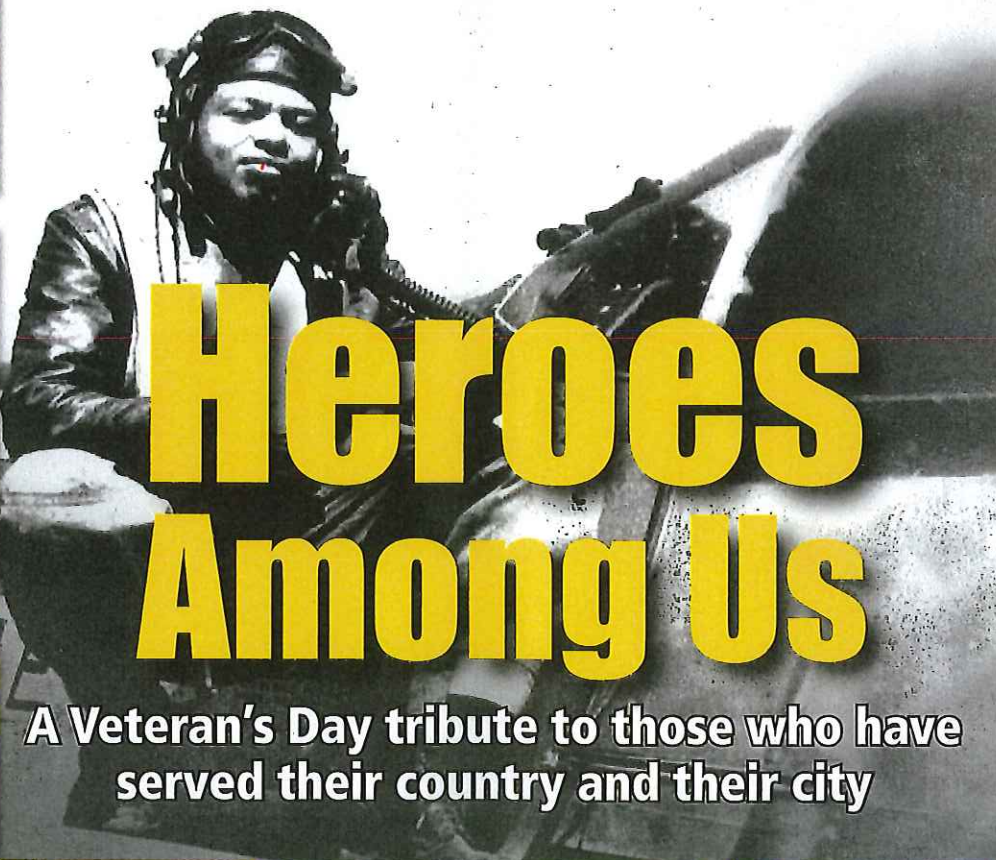




Fraternal Order of Police

CHICAGO LODGE 7

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Heroes Among Us

A Veteran's Day tribute to those who have served their country and their city



Jack Lyle

'You are America'

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Returning from a mission over Berlin when flying with the 99th Fighter Squadron out of Ramitelli, Italy in 1944, fighter pilot John Lyle noticed three planes tailing his P-40 that he thought were German Messerschmitt. Lyle promptly dropped his wing tanks, turned his craft around and prepared to do battle.

"I don't know what I was going to do against them," Lyle quipped. "Turned out they were our P-51s coming back from the same mission. But they looked like Messerschmitt. Shows you how goofy it can be."

Celebrities of war and service and honor flow from Jack Lyle, as he has been known since long before serving in WWII. As he celebrates Veteran's Day, four days following his 95th birthday, this former Chicago Park District Police Officer tries to downplay being one of the 19 remaining Tuskegee Airmen.

But that's the fact, Jack. He was part of the first African-American flying squadron to deploy overseas, and part of the U.S. Army Air Corps group of navigators, bombardiers, mechanics, instructors, crew chiefs, nurses, cooks and other support personnel that formed the famed Tuskegee Airmen. The Airmen earned 96 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 14 Bronze Stars, 744 Air Medals and eight Purple Hearts. Lyle is also a Congressional Gold Medal winner, having been so awarded in 2007 by then Illinois Senator Barack Obama.

We celebrate Veteran's Day 2015 by spending time with Jack and wife Eunice at their Southside home reflecting on service, the key to surviving 36 combat missions that sometimes lasted up to eight hours and what it takes to make it to 95 years old. The members of the group that has come to hear Jack's facts are beyond mesmerized. Imagine touching a part of U.S. History.

"You are America," Ray Casiano tells Jack. Lodge 7 First Vice President Casiano, whose own military service has made him an awestruck admirer here, wants to clarify that thought. "I look at the flag, and there's no doubt in my mind that you are one of those stars or stripes," he continues. "Stars and stripes might not be strong enough. You are the thread that holds the flag together."

As Jack cracks, "I quite agree," the room busts with laughter. He has no interest in being a piece of living history. He's more interested in the living part, and herein lies the significance of making it to 95.

Jack teaches us that veterans are not just veterans of war or service, but veterans of a momentous life. And he reminds us why we should listen to them on Veteran's Day, and every other day. Listen and learn.

"Most of us don't have real knowledge," Jack explains. "To have knowledge, you have to have experienced things that you can talk about. You can't look in a book and get somebody's ideas and call that knowledge."

Jack's current preoccupation is being a sailor. He docks his boat at Jackson Park Yacht Club in the South Shore where he met Lodge 7 Trustee Marlon Harvey. Harvey has become one of Jack's favorite mates, a bit of a protégé and, though he might not admit it, somebody Jack can pass his affinity for service on to.

Harvey tells great stories about Jack, and loves the one about being on Jack's boat when he took on 10-foot waves and had the vessel heeling almost vertical. This tale reveals a lot about what made Jack a great Red Tail – as the Airman were nicknamed – and a pilot whose plane never took a hit despite flying through the most heinous of German anti-aircraft fire.

"I've always enjoyed the risk," Jack relates. "That's why I enjoyed the war because I liked having some kind of danger. The idea of the possibility of dying was a big thrill to me. We were in enemy territory four



From left, Jack Lyle shows some of the memorabilia he collected from serving with the famed Tuskegee Airmen to Lodge 7 First Vice-President Ray Casiano and Field Representative Marlon Harvey.

or five hours a day where we had no business being."

Living on the edge – for the better part of 95 years – comes down to this bit of wisdom: Jack does not believe in destiny or events being pre-ordained. Life is chance, he says. That's the fact.

So the chance of a lifetime came after he had himself drafted while playing pool with the head of the draft board because he couldn't find a job. While in Army Basic Training, he was on a bus headed to marksman training when a guy stepped on the bus and announced he was looking for people to join the 99th Black Pilots Group.

Jack reported to Tuskegee, Alabama in August of 1943 as part of a class of 800-900. When his class graduated a year later, there were 150. Of those, 27 pilots were deployed with the 99th. He admits not realizing the historical significance at that point.

"They kept raving about blacks having to prove themselves," Jack remembers. "I thought that was silly. I didn't think of it in terms of being black. We've been proving ourselves for years. You just go out and do something. It was small potatoes so to speak."

The historical significance is not lost on Harvey.

"What men like Jack went through, to me, it's huge," he says. "I don't know if young men today have the mettle it takes."

Jack looks back on his service as uneventful, all in the line of duty. The mission when flying into Germany over the Alps and the supercharger went out that left him flailing at 2,500 feet was merely part of the job. The supercharger came back, and he joked the hardest part of some of those eight-hour missions was holding his bladder.

He did what he had to do. He always has. When he was riding a motorcycle on crowd control detail with the Park District Police, his lieutenant told him and another officer to surround the crowd. Two of them. And they did it.

He wound up doing seven years with the Park District Police because he was a "seven-year guy." He left the Park District Police just before it was absorbed into the Department and spent another tour working as an officer in the City jail.

Jack was never really a veteran who became a cop or a cop who was a veteran. He was really a guy who could do anything from the time he learned to play violin and classical piano as a kid to the time he owned a horse stable and ran a lucrative tree-cutting business with Eunice to his time now as a sailor taking on those big waves.

And all with the single-mindedness that makes a great public servant: "I did it. It's done. I experienced it," he confides. "I enjoyed it. That was it."

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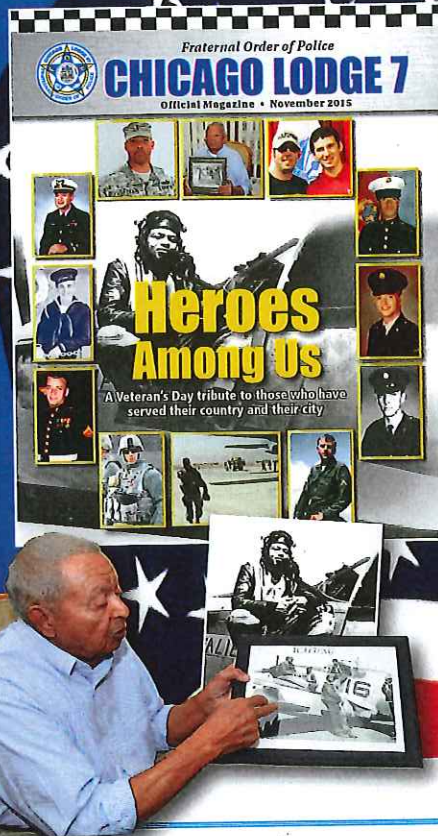
A Tribute to our Veterans

To honor Lodge members, active and retired, who have served both their country and their city, we present this special report that spotlights these Veterans. From the battlefields of WW II to Korea to Vietnam to Afghanistan and the Middle East, our Veterans tell their stories about how much it meant to serve in the military and how that has carried over to being dedicated police officers. The Chicago Police Department has a celebrated history of members serving in the military, including:

- One of the original Tuskegee Airmen
- An amazing story of survival and recovery from a tragedy in Afghanistan
- How the military provides the fortitude to march through any storm
- A WW II sailor whose destroyer helped sink the biggest Japanese battleship

And many more profiles of courage and honor featuring our Veterans. . .

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A lesson in labor relations

In the Lodge 7 Labor Corner, Attorney Pat Fioretto defines some of the key terms all members should know about labor relations. **Page 14**

Building the Foundation

The success of the Chicago Police Memorial Foundation can be traced to the cops who have supported the efforts to take care of families of fallen and catastrophically injured brothers and sisters. **Page 36**

Irish ayes

The Emerald Society of Illinois hosted two big events that honored law enforcement in Chicago and around the world. **Page 39**



Watching the detectives

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