

These Are Our Finest

By John H. Young III

*Not even the sun was bright that day down in Alabama
when a handful of Negro cadets went out to add the
highways of military eagle to the paths of the man of
color ... went out to answer the Nation's chimerical
question: Can a Negro fly and fight in airplanes?*

*The sun shines right, when things are bright; when the
wind blows strong and free.*

The challenge was great and the terms were harsh.

*Go down there, black man ... way down to Alabama.
Sweat out your days and sit out your nights. And
show me ... black boy ... show me you can fly.*

*The challenge was met by hearts that were strong. From
hamlets, towns and cities ... from States like Oregon,
Maine, California and Georgia ... came Jones,
Smith, Richards and Washington; in a long steady
procession they came to Tuskegee.*

The days were long. Hup, hup, hup, ho.

*Hold that nose down, Mister. Damn it, get that wing up.
Can 't you see that horizon, Mister? Quit holding
that rudder in turns.*

But the journey was swift.

*From plane to plane, from light to heavy ... from
Stearman to Beete to Ayetee to Thunderbolt ... from
Tuskegee to Italy.*

*Could a Negro fly military planes? Well, here they were in
Italy and there sat their P-40s cooling on the ramp.*

Pretty good, black man, pretty good. But wait a minute.

*That's not all. Can you FIGHT in planes? Will you come
scudding home with the first burst of fire? Better
take it easy for a while. Black man.*