

Burlington County Times

Tuskegee airmen honored by Willingboro Council

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WILLINGBORO — The Township Council honored Thomas Mayfield and Roscoe Dabney, both original Tuskegee Airmen, last week in recognition of receiving Congressional Gold Medals from President George W. Bush in March.

Both men said they have lived in the township for more than 35 years.

"We are very, very proud of you and we are certainly proud to have you in Willingboro," Deputy Mayor Jacqueline Jennings said at a May 2 council meeting.

The Tuskegee Airmen took their place in history as America's first black military airmen. They fought in World War II after training in Tuskegee, Ala., as part of an Army Air Corps program known as the Tuskegee Experiment.

More than 300 Tuskegee Airmen were honored with gold medals during a ceremony in the rotunda at the White House March 29. Dabney said many airmen were in wheelchairs due to old age, but he and Mayfield "stood tall."

Before the council meeting, Mayfield said he hadn't intended to settle in the township. "I came here in '70 temporarily, that's what my wife told me, and we've been here ever since then," he joked.

Former township residents and airmen Charles Washington and Bennett Hardy died before the medals were awarded.

Mayfield said Hardy's wife still lives in the township and traveled to Washington, D.C., on her husband's behalf. Mayor Jeff Ramsey said Hardy's wife would also receive a citation.