



INTERPIECES

CARROLLWOOD CULTURAL CENTER • Winter 2014 • Vol. 7 No. 1

■ The TEST: Story of the Tuskegee Airmen

Depicted from a bird's-eye view, the background of "Mission to Berlin" features strands of blue trickling through a green grid of tree-lined streets on the ground far below. This World War II aviation art piece honors Lt. Roscoe C. Brown Jr. of the U.S. Air Force's Tuskegee Airmen. In the foreground, Brown's silver and red P-51 D fighter plane defeats a German Me 262 jet, which is shown bursting into flame on its descent to earth. Charcoal plumes of smoke meet the cloudy contrails of the American plane, richly detailed from its red-painted tail to the nose art featuring "Bunnie" in red letters.

"I believe that some of the most incredible things that people did in World War II will only be known to God...We are poorer not knowing these stories." - Jerry Taliaferro

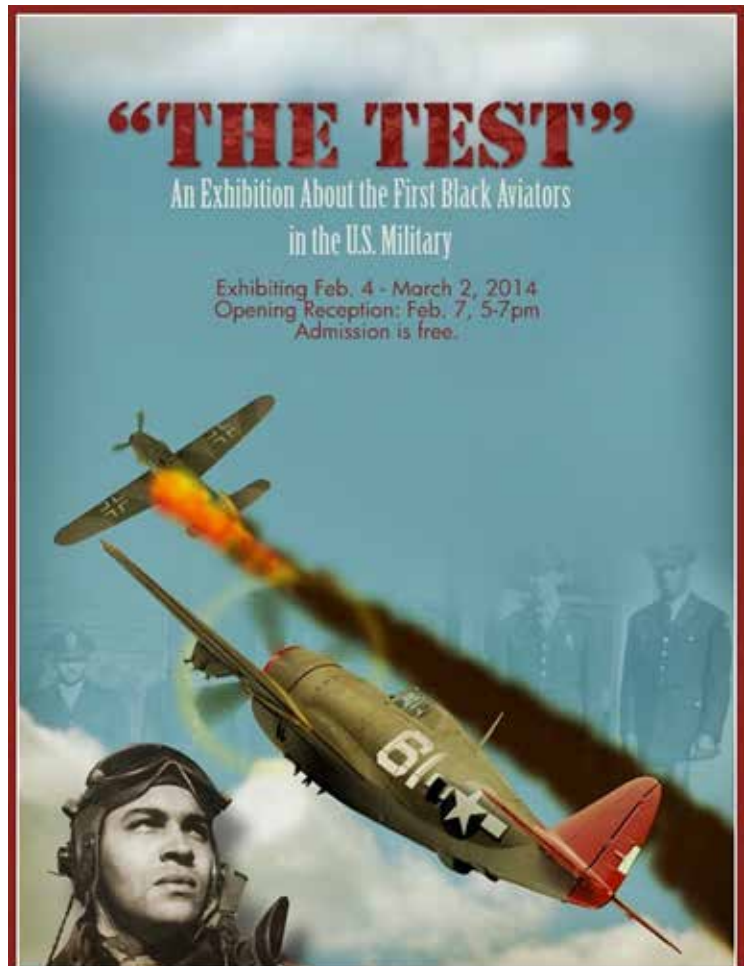
This is one of many custom images created by photographer Jerry Taliaferro for his exhibit "The TEST," which chronicles the experiences of the first African American combat aviators.

The first black pilots in the military were the Tuskegee Airmen, named for the Tuskegee Army Air Field they trained at in Alabama. These men were determined to serve their country in World War II, despite a concern among many that black men could not be effective combat pilots. The War Department initiated the "Tuskegee Experiment" to see if these pilots could succeed.

Of the 13 who enlisted in the first aviation cadet class in 1941, five completed the training and received silver pilot wings in 1942. This paved the way for others to graduate, totaling 992 by 1946.

The critical test phase of the "Tuskegee Experiment" began in 1943, when the first squadron deployed to North Africa to enter combat. The outcome of this test—a magnificent success—impacted future opportunities for African Americans in and outside of the military.

"The TEST" brings the story of these airmen to life through photographs, carefully researched depictions of events, aircraft models, maps and graphics. *(continued on page 5)*



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Banner Image:
Didi by Michele Miley. For more information, contact Michele Miley at mgmiley001@yahoo.com.



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CULTURAL CENTER

Visit CARROLLWOODCENTER.ORG for upcoming events and activities.

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The Carrollwood Cultural Center is a partnership between Hillsborough County and the Friends of Carrollwood Cultural Center. The Friends of Carrollwood Cultural Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

■ Centerpieces

Official Newsletter of the Carrollwood Cultural Center
Winter 2014 • Vol. 7, Issue 1

Centerpieces reports quarterly on activities, people and issues associated with the Carrollwood Cultural Center. Letters to the editor and reader submissions are welcome. Please email the editor at centerpieces@carrollwoodcenter.org or mail to *Centerpieces*, Carrollwood Cultural Center, 4537 Lowell Road, Tampa, FL 33618. Include your name, address, phone number and the date. *Centerpieces* may edit your submission or withhold publication.

Centerpieces is produced by volunteers of the Carrollwood Cultural Center. New contributors are welcome.

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Thank you to all of the volunteers who contribute to the success of the Center. We couldn't do it without you!

■ Center Mission

Our mission is to provide cultural and educational programs and events to our region that enhance learning, creativity, and a sense of community across groups and generations.



50 Shades of Happiness

The story in this issue on singing made me think about words that describe the happiness we get from singing. Eskimos have hundreds of words for snow. How many words do we have in English for happiness? Well...*cheer, joy, merriment, fun, delight, elation, pleasure ...etc. etc.*

Happiness, as the Red Queen said to Alice, is whatever you want it to mean. Especially today, when happiness is a growth industry: We have *The Happiness Hypothesis*, *The Happiness Project*, *Happiness at Home*, the positive psychology movement, internet gurus, blogs, not to mention drugs that make you happy. We are all encouraged to find the means and moments that ring our bells. Happiness has a million faces and flavors.

But in singing, we're not really talking about the happiness you get from ice cream, a new dress, your brother's wedding, connecting with five old friends on Facebook or making a big sale.

UBERGLUEKICHT (oo-ber-glu-kitsch): Over the top happiness in the moment.

The happiness in singing seems more fundamental. It is transcultural and perhaps even trans-species. It reminds me of a German word that I came across years ago that describes the happiness creatures feel in being fully themselves, in giving free rein to their natural physical energies; e.g., birds to fly, wolves to run, mountain goats to scramble up the mountainsides. The word is *ubergluekicht* (oo-ber-glu-kitsch) which means, roughly, "over the top happiness in the moment." (Note: thanks to Pat Keeley and her German language expert friend for help tracking this word down.) Think of a songbird singing variations on its song for 15 minutes, baby deer frolicking in the woods, small children (or kittens) tumbling over each other. When you sing, you feel *ubergluekicht*.

The key is endorphins. This is happiness based in the exercise of the body, yet it takes you out of—beyond—yourself. Singing, like playing music and dancing, puts body and mind hand-in-hand; you synchronize them in service of an energy larger than the self, that seems to *play through* the self. When in a group, the effect is magnified. You are even more *ubergluekicht*.

Now...I like this word because it's humorous. It's funny-looking and sounding. I say to myself, *super (uber) glue kit*, which sounds like it means (super sticking-to-it) and is not that far a stretch from its meaning. *Ubergluekicht* is one of those wonderful, composite German words (like *schadenfraude*) expressing a state that English needs a long, clumsy phrase to approximate. And saying it makes you smile—like singing itself.

It may or may not apply to singing. If you have other suggestions, please send them to Centerpieces. Meanwhile, I wish all of you *ubergluekicht* in 2014.

Evelyn Bless

■ Singing: It's Good for You

I'm standing before the Pearly Gates, ready for my standard issue harp and halo. St. Peter stops me cold.

"You've been such a good girl, Pat, we're going to give you a rare and well deserved gift. We're going to let you relive one special moment in your life. You only have three hours, so just tell me what it is and away you go."

Without hesitation I blurt out, "My first performance of the *Carmina Burana* at the Ft. Lauderdale library auditorium, about 1986."

I remember...

In the 1980s, the Carmina Burana was new to Florida. I am with the Nova University Community Singers. We have two pianos and some tympani. The auditorium is full; it holds about 500 people. After the first "O'Fortuna" we singers are on auto-pilot until the end. The audience jumps to its feet and screams, stamps its feet and applauds. We feel their energy surging toward us. But it is the hour-and-a-half of singing that transports us to a higher level of consciousness. It is like a runner's high; endorphins pour into every cell of our bodies. We float on the risers, totally unaware of bad knees and sore backs. We are awash in pleasure.

With apologies to great restaurants, best friends and lovely boyfriends, this is the one experience I would like to live over.

What is it about singing (and music), especially in a communal setting, that generates this amazing cascade of endorphins? Endorphins attach to the opioid receptors in our brains. We've found other chemicals, such as opium, morphine, demoral and plant derivatives like cocaine, that also bind to these receptors. But we produce endorphins naturally. We generate them during exercise, excitement, bodily trauma, consumption of spicy foods and making love. And when we sing.

Speaking only for myself, I think singing is the easiest and most long-lasting way of getting an endorphin high.

Before I go on, let's take a look at the origins of singing. As we evolved to become more upright, our neck elongated. The larynx (voice box) migrated further down the neck, allowing us to produce sound. Originally, humans imitated bird calls. We also used the singing voice to express emotion, warn of danger and calm ourselves or others. Some researchers feel that early humans didn't even know they could communicate by singing. (continued on page 4)

Singing: It's Good for You *(continued from page 3)*

Singing predates the development of language. There is no culture on earth that does not sing. Why? Is it the endorphins? The purpose of an endorphin high is to make us feel good (thank you, God) and by doing so, to encourage certain behaviors. Endorphins entice us to mate and propagate the species, help us get out of harm's way so we can tend to wounds, and ensure that we bond together and live in groups rather than as solitary individuals. This is good for the species; a community better protects women and children. Endorphins are survival and evolutionary necessities. And they are associated with singing, both alone and in groups.

Many cultures still regard singing not only as vital to religious beliefs, but as good for individuals and society.

Choral singing is found all over the world and is a means of social bonding. As early as 3500 BC, the Mesopotamian cultures considered music essential to artistic expression and to praising their gods. Group singing continues to play an important part in most religions. The Buddhists believe chanting—especially group chanting, which is closely related to singing—is a means of communal expression and elevates the group to a mystical experience.

Singing has been shown to improve mental and physical health. In England, Nikki Slade, who healed herself from a nervous breakdown with daily singing, runs group singing therapy sessions. (*The Guardian*, *The Observer*, February 2001) She reports that many members of the group have overcome serious mental dysfunctions through choral chanting and singing.

A 2008 study in Australia found that choral singers rate their lives more satisfactory than a control group which did not sing. Both groups experienced similar problems, such as illness, divorce and job loss, during the study. A 1998 study ("How Stuff Works") reported that choral singing sessions for nursing home residents, many of whom suffered from dementia or Alzheimer's, greatly decreased their depression, anxiety and pain.

Singing, especially choral, by its very nature improves the brain's function. A singer must breathe deeply through the diaphragm in order to sustain a passage and produce volume. In the Center's Community Chorus, director Mary Jo Hahn puts us through warm-ups that discipline our ears, exercise our vocal cords and send oxygen to our brains.

I can testify personally to the social bonding that singing produces. Each member of the Center's Chorus is aware that we join together for a common purpose and act as one in creating a beautiful sound. We become part of a higher whole. While

this may no longer have direct survival value for our "tribe," it is equally valuable today. When we are isolated from each other by computers, texting, cubicles and our own problems, experiencing the unity of a choral group is a joy. Even if you cannot read music or have never sung in a group, you will feel this if you join a chorus. And it is good for your health.

Members of the Center's Chorus look forward to our performances because we anticipate the pleasure, both for us and the audiences. We are ordinary people who get to dress up, go on



The Carrollwood Cultural Center Community Chorus
Pat Keeley is in the first row, fifth from the left.

a stage with peers and produce beautiful music. In these moments, we are the center of the universe. It feels good...no, it feels fantastic. That is why I sing.

Pat Keeley

■ Congratulations to the Chorus!

Congratulations to the Carrollwood Cultural Center Center Chorus on its December activities, which included Handel's *Messiah*, a return invitation to Busch Gardens for its annual Christmas Town, which included two half-hour off-paper programs, and holiday performances at St. Timothy's Catholic Church Family Festival and at a fundraiser for Metropolitan Ministries at Keystone Community Church.

The Chorus is always looking for new members. If you are interested, simply show up Monday nights at the Center at 7 p.m. in the Theatre Room.

The TEST

(continued from page 1)

A former soldier, Taliaferro says he never heard the real story of the airmen when growing up. "I'm a West Pointer, and I had a class on the history of military art where they mentioned something about Benjamin O. Davis Jr., but not in detail. I'd always been fascinated with aircraft, but I'd never heard about the Tuskegee Airmen. I just imagine how it would have impacted me in the '50s and '60s growing up in the south and loving John Wayne movies . . .

"It was curious to me that one man would not even say that he'd been a fighter pilot in World War II, because people wouldn't believe it. That was incredible to me."

Since its debut in 2009, "The TEST" has been shown throughout the country. While Taliaferro focuses on the same history as other exhibits about the airmen, he tells the story in a more visually exciting way.

Take an art piece like "Mission to Berlin." "We're trying to give a wingman's view to the action," Taliaferro says. "There are always two aircrafts, because each pilot flew with a wingman. I'm sure people have made some of these things, but I hadn't seen it anywhere else."

The creative process for this image began with Roscoe Brown recounting his mission to Taliaferro, who then reconstructed it. "Roscoe shot down a German jet and was very detailed about where the bullet strikes hit. I built it exactly as he remembered it, including the nose art on that particular aircraft."

To accurately portray a particular mission on a given day, Taliaferro uses Google Maps and post-bomb strike reconnaissance photos to see what the terrain and surrounding buildings looked like. He then colorizes the image in Photoshop and uses it as a background for a composite photo. Descriptions of an aircraft are verified by searching for its tail number and serial number in Air Force records. These checks are important, he says, because while some of the veterans provide vivid accounts, "others' memories are getting a little long."



LEFT: ROSCOE C. BROWN, WITH PILOTED BY GREENHORN-MELTZ, BELONGING TO PG-7 OVER BERLIN ON 24 MARCH 1945

BERRY TALIAFERRO



MISSION TO BERLIN



Once a piece is finished, he consults with sources from his list of about 30, including a retired Australian colonel and Air Force historian Daniel Haulman. Haulman has published several books on the airmen, one of which dispels the myth that the 332nd Fighter Group "never lost a bomber."

In fact, the Group set an unprecedented record of flying 200 of its 205 bomber escort missions without losing a bomber to enemy aircraft.

The Center's exhibit includes panels honoring Al Downing, a former music educator and namesake of the Al Downing Tampa Bay Jazz Association. Downing served with the Tuskegee Airmen before leading the 613th Army Air Force Band in Tuskegee.

Even in his efforts to capture great stories of sacrifice or an account of a lone survivor, Taliaferro recognizes that not everything can be documented. "I believe that some of the most incredible things that people did in World War II will only be known to God, as there were no other witnesses to an individual faithfully and dutifully doing his or her best to the end. We are poorer not knowing these stories."

Marianne Galaris

■ Norma Stemm

Norma Stemm can usually be found volunteering at the Center's front desk. She'll answer all your questions and help you find what you're looking for. You wouldn't know that this gracious volunteer is also a world traveler, history buff and professional dog groomer.

**"I'm a people person and always have been."
- Norma Stemm**

Norma and her husband Bob have lived in Carrollwood since 2001 and have owned a home here for more than two decades. She grew up in a small town in Alabama ("a farmer's daughter"); her father owned a large farming operation in Alabama and Mississippi. "I didn't know the meaning of Labor Day or Memorial Day," she says. "We were always helping out." Mysteriously, Norma never acquired a southern accent—perhaps because she was destined to leave the South. After her marriage, she moved to Michigan. She lived there for 40 years and hated the cold weather the entire time. "In the winter, I became a recluse."

You could hardly call her a recluse now. Norma was one of the first volunteers at the Center. She's active in her church and other groups. Every Monday, she hosts 15 to 22 women at her house to play Hand and Foot, a form of Canasta. Norma is unfazed at entertaining so many people each week. "I like it. I started out serving lunch, and then it got too big. Now everyone brings something."

"I'm a people person and always have been," she says. It runs in her family. Her grandparents always invited people over for coffee or wine after church. "My parents were very social, and so were my kids. I never knew how many kids we'd have over to dinner—everyone, including the kids, would invite them."

Speaking of kids, the original lure of Florida (besides being an escape from the cold) was that her son Greg was attending college here. Greg is the founder of Odyssey Marine Exploration, which conducts archeological explorations of shipwrecks. Although he lives in Tampa, "he's never really here; he's always traveling, usually out of the country." Her daughter, Tracy Stemm Crews, played Anna in *The King and I* and had a major role in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. Tracy runs a musical performance studio for kids in New Tampa and directs adult theatre. Another son, Scott, owns three hotels in Brazil with his Brazilian wife.

As in many families, Norma's and her children's interests overlap. For example, Norma's favorite arts activity is musical theatre. She has helped direct, created costumes and done makeup. Unlike her daughter, Norma has no desire to perform. "I like working with everyone," she says. She's resourceful; people turn to her when they have a problem. For example, Tracy asked her once what kind of food to get for a stage set



NORMA STEMM: world traveler, history buff, professional dog groomer and a great volunteer!

that would last two weeks. "I got a smoked turkey," she said. "What's going to happen to a smoked turkey in two weeks?"

She also shares her son's interest in history and archeology, although on land rather than in the sea. "My passion is archeological history," she says. She's fascinated by old cities, such as Ephesus in Turkey, and buildings where traces of earlier generations can still be seen. She reads a lot of history and historical novels, and is especially interested in German history of the Nazi era.

Another surprise: Norma and her husband have owned a house in Nicaragua for 23 years. They were in Grenada on a Rotary project, and fell in love with the antique town. "Grenada is unique; it's the oldest unmoved settlement in the Southern Hemisphere," she says. "The town has never been relocated." They rent the house out and visit once a year, at the beginning of January.

She'd like to travel to more archeological sites, but between family, church, friends, visits to the family in Brazil and the house in Nicaragua—there are so many interests, so little time. And the dog grooming? Norma ran a dog grooming business in Michigan for over 30 years. It was so popular that she had to keep a low profile when she went back on visits. "People would call me and say, 'I see you're in town—are you still taking business?' I did it differently and people really liked it." (Note to the dog lovers among us: if you want to know what Norma did differently, you'll have to ask her. I did.)

Evelyn Bless

■ Living Art

Oscar Wilde said, "Life imitates art far more than art imitates life." He was stating a fact so obvious we don't even think about it: art is basic to almost everything that we do. Art permeates our lives. It helps form our perceptions of color, smell and sound; it makes the customs of how we live. We need to recognize art's fundamental role, especially today, when arts education and support are often seen as irrelevant.

**"Life imitates art far more than art imitates life."
- Oscar Wilde**

Art has a major impact on most of our day-to-day habits, moods and thoughts. We experience art through fashion, advertising, toys, hobbies, cooking, gardens and

public and private spaces, as well as in dance, books, music, films, concerts, plays and poetry. There are many more examples. All of these events have been shaped by our artistic heritage and senses, which influence what we enjoy looking at, how objects affect us and how we use our imaginations. A car isn't just a car. It's a transportation mechanism that is pleasing to your eyes, ears, nose and thoughts on many levels, including its design history and your personal history. A frying pan isn't just a pan. Its shape, substance and heft are functional but also pleasing. Art is in everything we touch: towels, tools, eyeliner, a chair. It is in everything we make, from music to macaroni and cheese. We either follow or take liberties with the forms, colors and other elements that are part of the armory of arts in our minds and hearts.

Art is not only the creation of objects that we consider beautiful. Art is also a way of being and acting, by definition a "skill acquired by experience, study and observation." It is the craft of our activities and customs. It shapes our lives. Weddings, fundraisers, fashion shows, social events, seminars and conferences are all art forms which impress, delight, challenge and inspire. In fact, the art elements in these events are often crucial to our decision-making process.

Art is tactile and sensory. We see the rich colors in a painting, revel in the written words of novels and poems, touch exquisite fabrics, smell and taste cuisine, sway to music and dance the night away. Art stirs our emotions: we lose ourselves in theatre and cinema performances, laugh at comedies, cry at sad stories. As an integral part of how we approach the world, art has evolved to encompass mind, heart, body and spirit.

Art is so omnipresent and important that it is like breathing, and so it escapes our notice. We embrace and essentially live art every day.

Janet Bucknor

■ Black History Month Quiz

February is Black History Month. In honor of the date, here's a quiz on prominent black artists and musicians (and one inspirational politician). Match the description to the name in the list below. We suggest trying this with your entire family. (And remember, it's OK to look up unfamiliar words and names.) Enjoy!

Pat Keeley

- ☐ Jazz poet
- ☐ Hudson River Landscape with Rainbow artist
- ☐ Native Son writer
- ☐ His world was beautiful
- ☐ Beloved
- ☐ Queen of Soul
- ☐ His Roots extended far and wide
- ☐ Satchmo
- ☐ Combined fuzz, feedback and controlled distortion to created a new musical form
- ☐ Known for her room-size cut-paper silhouettes
- ☐ Can finally exhale
- ☐ Her book club got couch potatoes into book stores
- ☐ Her favorite color was purple
- ☐ Recently deceased, he sang the song of freedom and forgiveness and tugged on the heart strings of the entire world
- ☐ Could scat when she needed to

Names:

1. Toni Morrison / 2. Kara Walker / 3. Alex Haley
4. Ella Fitzgerald / 5. Louis Armstrong
6. Langston Hughes / 7. Nelson Mandela
8. Angela Davis / 9. Oprah Winfrey
10. Jimi Hendrix / 11. Robert S. Duncanson
12. Ray Charles / 13. Alice Walker
14. James Baldwin / 15. Aretha Franklin



Would you like some wine?

The Center wants to hear from you! At which events would you like to have wine/spirits (jazz, theatre, band, art receptions, etc.)? Please email us at centerpieces@carrollwoodcenter.org or drop off a note for *Centerpieces* at the reception desk.



■ Annual Meeting February 21 at 7 p.m.

The annual meeting of Friends of the Carrollwood Cultural Center will be **February 21 at 7 p.m.** in the main theatre. The meeting is open to all Center members and anyone who is interested in the Center. This will be a regular Board of Directors meeting, with extra time for introductions and public commentary. Please come and bring your friends. This is a great opportunity to find out more and share your opinions about the Center.

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