

# Trio work toward lasting memorial for Tuskegee Airmen from Jersey

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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**ALTON - The Cisco brothers**, originally from Jersey County, are becoming more of a known name.

The two were both a part of the legendary **Tuskegee Airmen**. The Tuskegee Airmen were an all-black fighter group in World War II with a distinguished record, who also endured unspeakable racism, even after the war was over.

The two brothers - Arnold and George - are laid to rest in the Alton City Cemetery close to Elijah P. Lovejoy. Until now, the story of the two area men has rarely been told. A monument is scheduled to be dedicated for them on June 3, 2017, at the cemetery.

An upright granite memorial will include photos of the brothers, an image of a “Red-tail Angels” fighter plane and also the words: “Tuskegee Airmen.” The monument cost is \$5,000 and there have been several donations, but more funds are needed to complete the project.

“We need the funds to complete the project by the end of March,” the men said in an interview recently. “We are resetting the existing stones and creating the upright granite memorial for the two men. Our hope is school children will visit the area and learn the history. We also hope to see it on the Vintage Voices Tour at Alton Cemetery. We want their story to be told to others.”

Arnold went directly into the Tuskegee Airmen in Alabama after attending college with his brother. George joined a tank division but he left after being accepted. George died in training with the Tuskegee Airmen. Arnold died when he was on a transport plane that hit power lines. Neither of the brothers died in literal combat situations.

Eugene Jones Baldwin, writer/researcher, and historians Charlie Baird and Lorenzo Small, are leading a project to establish the memorial. Eugene and Charlie graduated from Alton High School together and have been long-time friends.

Recently, the men made presentations at Alton Museum of History and Art and Alton High School about the two men. The Alton Museum of History and Art is taking donations to allow Baird and Baldwin to establish a memorial for them and their sacrifices at Alton Cemetery.

### **This is the background on both men:**

**George Cisco** joined the U.S. Army's 761st Tank Battalion after graduating from officer training school at Fort Knox, Ky., in 1943, with the rank of second lieutenant. Not long after, he transferred to the Army Air Corp and earned his pilot's wings, officially becoming a Tuskegee Airman. He was killed tragically on a training mission on Aug. 16, 1944, when his Thunderbolt plane was hit by another plane as it landed at Walterboro Air Base in South Carolina.

**Captain Arnold Cisco** joined the Tuskegee Airmen serving as a flight leader in fighter plane attacks on German aircraft. Stationed with the 99th Pursuit Squadron at Ramitelli Air Base in Italy, he flew missions protecting the 5th Bomb Wing over Bucharest, Hungary, as the oil refineries below were destroyed, eliminating 30 percent of Germany's oil supply. Cisco earned the Oak Leaf Cluster of World War II, the Victory Service Medal and the European-African-Middle Eastern Theater medal.

In 1946, returning from leave with his wife Billie in Chicago, Captain Cisco's transport plane back to Tuskegee crashed when it hit electric wires during a storm.

Checks to contribute to the memorial can be mailed directly to the Alton Museum of History and Art, made payable to the Tuskegee Airmen Memorial, or go to the Cisco brothers Go Fund Me memorial site <https://www.gofundme.com/tuskegee-airmen-cisco-memorial>.



GEORGE EDWARD CISCO  
ILLINOIS  
2 LIEUT. AIR FORCES  
JUNE 2, 1918 AUG. 16, 1944

ARNOLD WILSON CISCO  
ILLINOIS  
CAPT. AIR CORPS WORLD WAR II  
AUG. 10, 1920 MAY 19, 1946