

# Black group honors Duluth man's feats

## *Pilot named 'history maker'*

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Duluth's Joseph Gomer fought two fronts during and after World War II: one against the Nazis, the other against prejudice back home.

He helped win both and should be considered an American hero, leaders of a Chicago-based nonprofit said in selecting Gomer to their 2002 class of "history makers." Gomer and more than 100 other black pioneers will be honored at a banquet Thursday in the Windy City. They'll each receive bronze statues during the \$150-a-plate event.

"Joseph embodies what our organization is all about," HistoryMakers Project Director Crystal Foster said. "This honor is for his accomplishments with the Tuskegee Airmen and for the

paths he chose his entire life."

HistoryMakers is a 3-year-old national nonprofit that is videotaping oral histories and creating an archive of famous and unsung black Americans. Representatives of the group traveled to Duluth this summer to record Gomer's story, as told in his own words.

Growing up in Iowa, Gomer was fascinated first by model airplanes, according to a published family history. He received his pilot's license before his driver's license.

In July 1942, at the age of 22, he enlisted in the Army. He was sent to Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama under an experiment launched by congressional order the previous year.

For more than three decades, only white Americans had flown combat missions.

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See **HONOR**, Page 2B