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Black Pilot Makes History With Thunderbirds

One of the country's big thrills during the Bicentennial year which is fast drawing to a climax was the aerial exhibitions given by the United States Air Force Thunderbirds.

The Thunderbirds thrilled millions around the country with their aerial demonstrations which are designed to show the capabilities of the men and women and aircraft in the Air Force.

Slot pilot for the Thunderbirds during this year's Bicentennial observance was Captain Lloyd Newton of Ridgeland, South Carolina, who was narrator during the 1975 show season. He described the intricate maneuvers of the Thunderbirds to over 5,500,000 spectators at 90 air shows in 1975.

The recognition afforded America's "Ambassadors in Blue" as an official Bicentennial organization was especially important to the Thunderbird slot pilot.

"Because of our visibility," said Lloyd, "we had a unique opportunity to express and display our feelings surrounding the 200 years of achievements made by the people of this great nation of ours."

Dreams do come true and the new slot pilot for the Thunderbirds is one of the first to agree.

Since childhood Captain Newton dreamed about flying aircraft, never once thinking that one day he would

be a member of the world famous Thunderbirds.

Lloyd is one of eight children and the first of three to make the Air Force a career.

He graduated from Tennessee State University in 1966 with a bachelor of science degree in aviation education and earned his commission as a distinguished military graduate through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps program.

It was in college that Lloyd made it one of his goals to become a Thunderbird.

After earning his pilot wings in 1967, he reported to George AFB. California, where he received combat training in the F-4 Phantom.

Lloyd's next assignment was to Southeast Asia where he flew 269 combat missions, 79 over North

For his flying accomplishments in Southeast Asia he earned the

Lloyd has a total of more than 2,200

He is married to the former Ruby

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, I'm Captain Lloyd Newton of the United States Air Force Thunderbirds .

Boyhood dreams realized by South Carolina

pilot who flew slot position in world famed

Air Force Thunderbirds:

Distinguished Flying Cross; Air Medal with 16 Oak Leaf clusters; Air Force Commendation Medal; Vietnam Service Medal; and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

hours of jet aircraft flying time:

M. Gadson of Yemassee, South Carolina. The Newtons now reside in Las Vegas with their three children, Lloyd Jr., Cheryl and Lori.

It was in April, 1975, when Captain Newton, then the narrator of the Thunderbirds, stood before a microphone in Mountain Home, Idaho and introduced himself and his fellow pilots to 20,000 spectators:

That moment marked the realization of Capt. Newton's dream, and he has been moving upward with the Air CAPTAIN LLOYD NEWTON

Slot pilot

Force Thunderbirds ever since. It is traditional for the newest

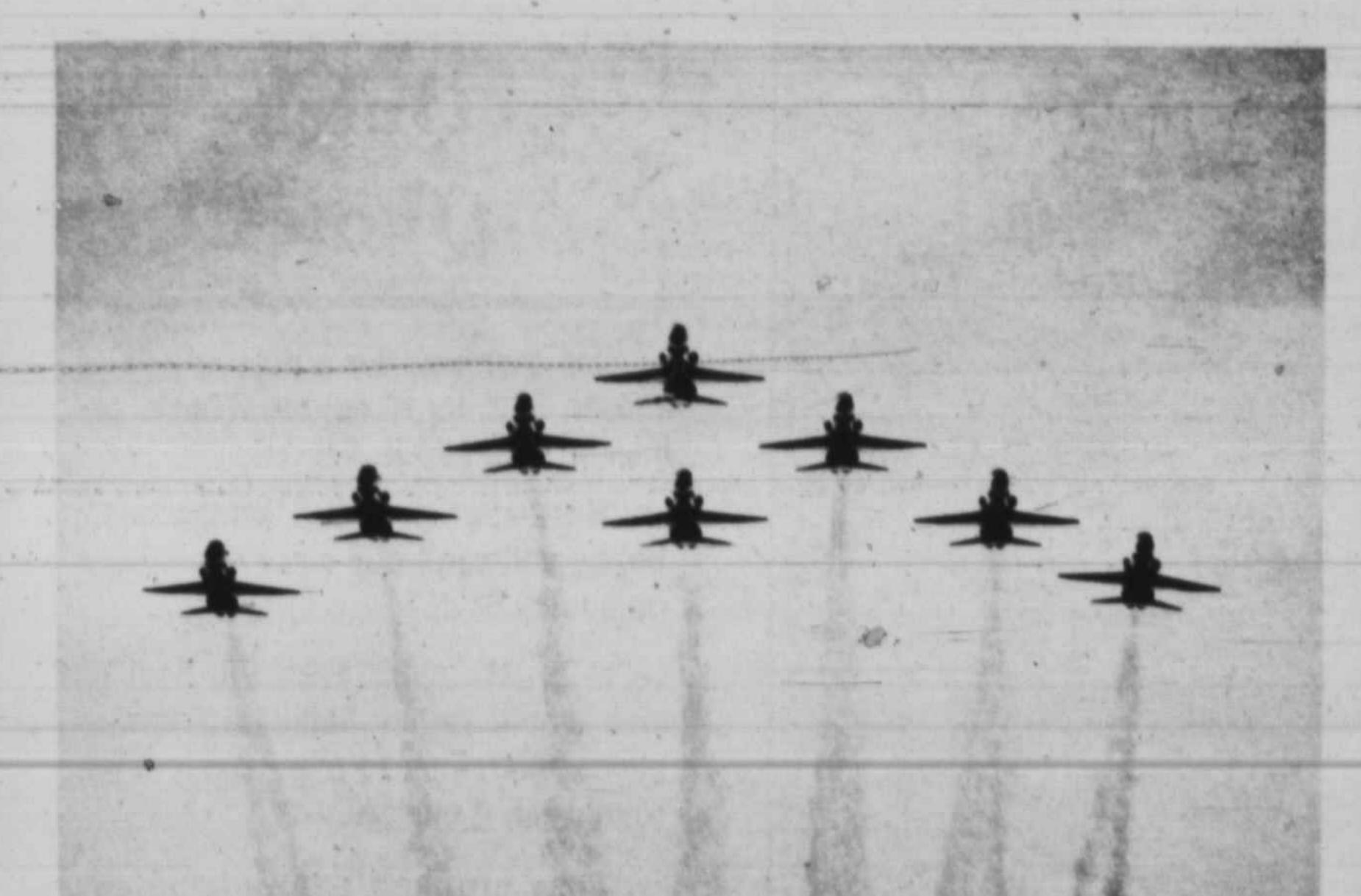
member of the Thunderbirds to serve as a narrator and backup pilot, then take his spot as a pilot. This he did this year, handling the slot position.

Capt. Newton was born during the first year black fighter pilots were permitted to fly in combat in World War II, the precedent-setting pilots serving with the 99th Pursuit Squadron and later the 332nd Fighter Group under General Benjamin H.

Newton grew up on a 10-acre cattle farm not too far from the Charleston Air Force Base. He recalls first thinking about joining the Air Force when he was in his senior year at Jasper High School.

When he reached 18 and was

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Eight aircraft of the Thunderbird Traveling Contingent were a common sight this year as the team winged its way to nearly 110 shows in 40 states and Canada.



The Thunderbird wingmen were photographed as they pulled up and rolled to the outside of the formation and position to rejoin on the wing of the slot pilot — Capt. Newton.