

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with David James

PERSON

James, David F., 1923-2016

Alternative Names: David James;

Life Dates: November 17, 1923-July 23, 2016

Place of Birth: St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Occupations: Military Officer; Lawyer

Biographical Note

Army Air Corps officer and attorney Lt. David F. James was born on November 17, 1923 in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1941, after graduating from Lane Tech High School in Chicago, James attended Loyola University. During his freshman year in 1942, James entered the U.S. Army Air Corps Aviation Cadet Training Program in Tuskegee, Alabama. Upon arrival at Tuskegee Air Field, James was assigned to the 332nd Fighter Group where he trained to fly single seat fighter planes.

From 1944 to 1945, James flew combat missions with the 332nd Fighter Group over Germany as well as other countries in Eastern Europe during World War II. In 1946, James completed his tour of duty with the Army Air Force and re-enrolled at Loyola University. Later, in 1949, James graduated from Loyola University with his B.A. degree. James was hired by business machine manufacturer Burroughs Corporation in 1950 and became the company's first African American salesman. In 1956, James found a job with the University of Chicago before he was appointed as a deputy director with the State of Illinois in 1961. While there, part of his responsibilities involved working on the "War on Poverty." James then graduated from DePaul University College of Law with his J.D. degree in 1963. James was hired by the American Bar Association (ABA) in 1967 and became the first African American attorney to be hired by that organization. He worked at the ABA until 1984.

In 1967, James became the first African American homeowner in Winnetka, Illinois. Soon after moving to Winnetka, James became involved in groups that were forming on the North Shore to promote better race relations and open housing. In 1967, James and his wife, Mary, established Together We Influence Growth (TWIG) Day Camp that brings together children from South Side neighborhoods and children from the North Shore. In 1972, James helped found the North Shore Interfaith Housing Council (now the Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs), which is organized to fight housing discrimination. In the late 1980s, James was appointed as an administrative law judge for the U.S. Department of Labor. In 1990, James went into private practice as an attorney and remained there until 2000. In 2009, James, along with more than one hundred other Tuskegee Airmen, attended the Inauguration Ceremony of President Barack Obama.

Army Air Corps Officer Lt. David F. James was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 21,

2013.

James passed away on July 23, 2016.

Related Entries

De Paul University School of Law [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Loyola University Chicago [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Lane Technical College Prep High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Diploma

McCosh Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Primary

De Paul University School of Law [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

J.D.

Alterman Drug Store [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1978 to 1982]

Green Grover

Alterman Drug Store [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Soda Jerk

Burroughs [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1981 to 1985]

Salesman

University of Chicago [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1956 to 2006]

State of Illinois [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1974 to ?]

Deputy Director

American Bar Association (ABA) [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1980 to ?]

Many

Delete [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1990 to 2000]

Attorney

Department of Labor [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1985 to ?]

Administrative Judge

Sigma Chi Fraternity [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]