

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

PERSON

James, David , 1923-

Alternative Names: James, David , 1923-;

Life Dates: November 17, 1923-

Place of Birth: St. Louis, Missouri

Residence: Chicago, IL (from ? to ?)

Occupations: Army Air Corps Officer; Attorney

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.

Related Entries

Lavinia, Guyol [GRANDCHILDOf]
Maternal Grandmother

John, Foster [GRANDCHILDOf]
Maternal Grandfather

James, Genevieve [SIBLINGOf]
Brother

James, Bernard [SIBLINGOf]
Sister

James, William [SIBLINGOf]
Brother

James, Doris [SIBLINGOf]
Sister

James, Marianne [SIBLINGOf]
Sister

James, John [SIBLINGOf]
Brother

James, Andrew [SIBLINGOf]
Brother

James, Julia [SIBLINGOf]
Sister

James, George [SIBLINGOf]
Brother

James, Ann [PARENTOf]
Daughter

James, Thomas [PARENTOf]
Son

James, Cathy [PARENTOf]
Daughter

James, William [CHILDOf]
Father

James, David [PARENTOf]
Son

James, Peter [PARENTOf]
Son

James, Mary [PARENTOf]
Daughter

Foster, Ada [CHILDOf]
Mother

De Paul University School of Law [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1952]

Loyola University [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1949-06-10]

B.A.

Albert G. Lane Technical High School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1941-06]

Diploma

McCosh Elementary School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1937-01]

Primary

De Paul University School of Law [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1963]

J.D.

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

Green Grover

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

Soda Jerk

Burroughs [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1950 to 1955]

Salesman

University of Chicago [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1956 to ?]

State of Illinois [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1961 to ?]

Deputy Director

American Bar Association [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1967 to 1984]

Many

Self-Employed [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1990 to 2000]

Attorney

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

Administrative Judge

Sigma Chi [MEMBEROF]