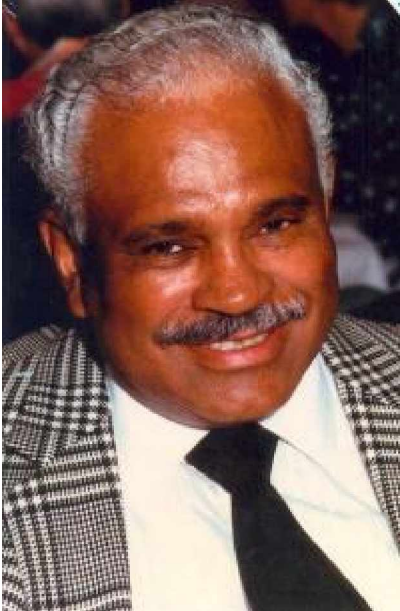


Tuskegee veteran also soared in his family's Denver businesses

By Virginia Culver

The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 05/25/2008 12:24:15 AM MDT



Craig Cousins, who died at age 83, owned and ran the Arcade Lounge on East 26th Avenue for 28 years. An avid golfer, he was a founder of the East Denver Golf Club. (Special to The Denver Post)

Craig Cousins went from being a Tuskegee Airman to running his family's businesses in Denver.

Cousins, who died May 10, at age 83, was from a family that included some of Denver's earliest African-American business entrepreneurs.

For 28 years, Cousins owned the Arcade Lounge at 725 E. 26th Ave.

Cousins was drafted into the Army Air Corps and became a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, an all-black unit that was formed in 1941.

Cousins was an aircraft mechanic, said his wife, Edith Cousins. Many of the 994 pilots trained at Tuskegee Army Air Field in Tuskegee, Ala.

Cousins was stationed there, as well as at Wichita Falls, Texas, and Fort Knox, Ky., his wife said.

When he returned to Denver, he went into business with his father, Charles L. Cousins, and brother, also Charles Cousins.

The family had owned the property on East 26th Avenue since the 1920s. "It was a mini-mall at first," said Cousins' daughter Yvette Cousins of Denver.

Craig Cousins decided to transform the block into the Arcade Lounge. When he retired, he sold the business and it became Big Al's Lounge for several years, Yvette Cousins said.

Craig Cousins and his father and brother owned several rental properties in the Five Points and City Park areas, Yvette Cousins said. Craig Cousins' father had moved to Denver in about 1902.

Cousins worked long hours, beginning before 6 a.m. and often not ending until 2 a.m., said Yvette Cousins.

After Cousins retired from the Arcade in the mid-1980s, he worked for 10 years as an excise and license inspector for the city and county of Denver.

Craig Cousins was born in Denver on Aug. 21, 1924, and graduated from Manual High School.