

BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

Tuskegee Airmen Inc. Public Relations, P.O. Box 830060
Tuskegee, AL 36083

SERGEANT GEORGE T. MITCHELL

July 11, 1920 ~ September 4, 2014



George Thomas Mitchell was born on July 11, 1920, the only child of Helen and Edward Mitchell. He grew up in South Philadelphia. His mother, aunt and grandmother all stressed the value of a good education. He applied for and was accepted into the highly competitive Central High School, one of two schools in that area that offered a B.A. Degree. He graduated with honors in 1938.

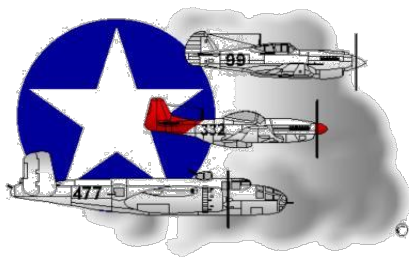
At the beginning of World War II, George was drafted into the Army Engineers, and because of his extensive radio/electronic experience and education was transferred to Tuskegee, Alabama for the "Tuskegee

Experiment"; a segregated Army Air Corps unit that trained Black pilots to fly and protect the American bombers flying over enemy territory.

The "Red Tails" had the distinction of having lost fewer bombers than their white pilot counterparts to enemy fire while under its protection. George's assignment was an Aviation Cadet Ground School Instructor in radio blinker code using the Aldus Light system. He also taught radio communications to student pilots and navigators. He was most proud of the fact that he never failed a student. If they were having difficulty, he voluntarily worked with them after class, ensuring that they would pass the coursework and be able to attain their dream of becoming an airman. He served as an instructor until his honorable discharge as a Sergeant declining an offer of Warrant Officer so that he could return to civilian life.

George met and married Lillian Frances Stokes and he and his new bride lived in Chicago, Illinois until moving to Bremerton, Washington, where he entered civil service as a Navy employee at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. He and the family later moved to Seattle, Washington and then in 1963, they moved to San Diego, California, where he was the Division Head Electronics Engineer for shipboard electronics systems. George continued studying and preparing himself for future promotions and to that end accepted a supervisory position at the Shore Repair Facility in Agana, Guam. He and the family lived there for 2





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years before transferring once again to Subic Bay, Philippines, where he took a position in the Shore Electronics Division. They remained there for the next 6 ½ years.

While living in Guam and the Philippines, George made dozens of trips to Vietnam (at the height of the Vietnam War), where he installed radar and communications equipment for the U.S. Navy. He was the only African American in the Navy Civilian Engineering Dept. In 1992, he retired as a GS-15 Technical Director Chief Electronics Engineer.

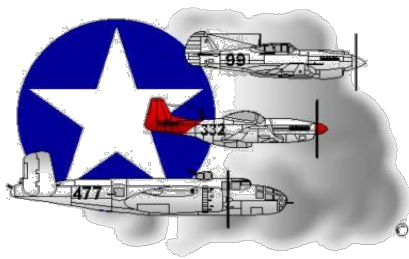
After retiring from Civil Service, he accepted employment with the University of California Scripps Institute of Oceanography as a U.S. Merchant Marine Radio Electronics Officer. As an accomplished and talented photographer, he was able to capture photographic details of the scientists' discoveries as they sailed the 2200 miles of the Amazon River. He later presented these slide shows voluntarily to school groups and other organizations once he returned to San Diego.

After retiring from Scripps, he worked for the Exxon Shipping Company as a Radio Officer for the oil tankers travelling between California and Valdez, Alaska. It should be noted that he was the only African American to have held these afore-mentioned positions. After his third and final retirement, in 1987, he was able to pursue his other passions of being an Amateur Radio enthusiast (call sign K6ZE), Jazz and photography. After the death of his wife Lillian, he met and married D'Andrea Davis and together raised his two stepsons, Robert Dee and Deon Davis Coons.

George was a published photographer who had pictures displayed at the San Diego Photographic Museum and he also won numerous National Awards. He even had his own darkroom where he developed black and white photos.

He is a past member of the Toastmasters, Urban League, NAACP and the Seattle Black Y.M.C.A. George was a faithful member of Chollas View United Methodist Church since 1963. He has donated thousands of hours over the years, taking pictures for community group functions, schools, churches, social events, etc. He has also served in the capacity of Docent, a voluntary position for Scripps Aquarium.





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George's love of animals is well known. He would never leave his house without a bottle of water, a leash and food for any strays that he would come across, coaxing the frightened, skittish animals into his car with a kind tone and gentle touch. If unable to locate the owner, he would use his own funds to have them spayed/neutered, get their shots and any other medical treatment that they required to make them more "adoptable". At one time, he and Dee had two extra dogs in their home that never quite made it to the Humane Society.

On March 29, 2007, George travelled to Washington, DC where he and several other Tuskegee Airmen were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for their service. He was most honored for his 75 years as an active Amateur Radio Operator by the Quarter Century Wireless Association. Before the era of cell phones and Skype, he volunteered his time to relay calls linking family members during natural disasters and also provided a "chat line" for overseas service members and their families back home.



When asked what advice he would give to today's youth he replied, "never stop learning or reading about your field of interest. Try to take courses to help you advance." He also said that he hoped that his legacy would be to inspire people who may not have completed college to show them that through continued study and training and professional growth, they too can complete their dreams. When asked what social changes had the most impact on him personally in his lifetime, he said that he had been most affected by voting rights, desegregation of schools, transportation and housing and the election of the first Black President.

George slipped away peacefully on September 4, 2014, surrounded by love.

