

BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN INC. PUBLIC RELATIONS, P.O. Box 830060
TUSKEGEE, AL 36083

MASTER SERGEANT SHADE M. LEE



Master Sergeant Shade Meshack Lee was born 5 June 1921 to Aubrey and Mahalie Lee in Daleville, Alabama. He was raised in Shady Grove, AL and Schenectady, New York. He was the ninth child in a family of 13 children. His father taught Shade to read at the tender age of three years old.

In March of 1942, Shade received orders to report to Tuskegee Army Airfield to train as an Aviation Cadet. Once there, he saw that there were 1700 men ahead of him for the Aviation Cadet program. There were only 33 Pilot slots available and since his family was poor and Black, he possessed no political pull to jump ahead of anyone. So, Shade found work as a Technical Inspector and Communications Chief, working on communications systems on aircraft. He was no stranger to the Jim Crow segregation laws of the south. He and his fellow Airmen were unhappy with the segregated training facility at Tuskegee.

Sergeant Lee had assignments with the 553rd Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group; 431st Bomb Squadron, 77th Tuskegee, AL as well as in Saipan and Okinawa in the Pacific. He left the Army Air Corps in 1943. He was one of seven Lee Sons to serve during World War II. In 1948, he reenlisted, this time into the Air Force and retired as a Master Sergeant in 1963. After military retirement, Master Sergeant Lee went on to work as an Electrical Engineer retiring from NBC Studios in New York City, NY in 1987.

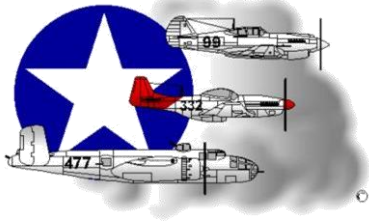
In 2009, President elect Barack Obama invited the Tuskegee Airmen to his inauguration and Master Sergeant Lee was among the group. Master Sergeant Lee's parents were honored posthumously in 2010 for having one of two families to have 7-active duty sons contributing to World War II's war efforts.



Civil rights and equality were two issues that Master Sergeant Lee fought to preserve. He had a life-long struggle against discrimination in the military and elsewhere. While living in Kansas, Master Sergeant Lee met the Scott brothers and their father – all attorneys. The attorneys were assisting members of the Topeka Chapter of the NAACP, including Master Sergeant Lee, to prepare a lawsuit. The case was eventually turned over to Attorney Thurgood Marshall to argue before the Supreme Court in 1954 – Brown vs Board of Education.

After the war, Master Sergeant Lee became an Amateur Ham Radio Operator. He enjoyed working with children hence his affiliation with the Civil Air Patrol. In later life, Master Sergeant Lee began writing and lecturing, preserving the history of the Tuskegee Airmen for younger generations.





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Master Sergeant Lee's military education includes: Unknown

Master Sergeant Lee's civilian education includes: Union County College, New Jersey and Kean College (now Kean University), Union, New Jersey.

Master Sergeant Lee's military awards include: Good Conduct Medal, 5 Oak Leaf Clusters; National Defense Service Medal, American Defense Medal, American Theater Campaign Medal, Asia Pacific Medal, and the WW II Victory Medal.

Master Sergeant Lee's civic awards and honors include: Unity Award for Achievement in Public Service, Union County New Jersey Human Relations Commission Honored by Plainfield, New Jersey NAACP, 5 Oct 2007; New Jersey NAACP 2012 Soldier of Valor Award.

Master Sergeant Lee passed away 7 October 2016 in his sleep. He was 95 years old. At the time of his death, MSgt Lee was living with his daughter in Buford, Georgia. He is survived by the love of his life, his wife of 63 years, Mary Lou Lee, children, Karla Manners, Esq. (Anthony Manners) and Phyllis Patterson (Tyrone Patterson), and grandchildren, Michael, Tiffani, Tatiana, Tai, Joshua, Jillian, Julie. He was predeceased by his daughter Dr. Marilyn Lee.

