



BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

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

WILLIAM THOMAS FAUNTROY, Jr.



Cadet William T. Fauntroy, Jr, 1945

William T. Fauntroy, Jr. was born on March 26, 1926 at the Columbia Hospital for Women in Washington, DC to William T. Fauntroy, Sr. and Ethel Vine Fauntroy. He was the second-born of eight children: Ellamae, Jewell, Doris Ann, Walter, Kenneth, Raymond, and Gerald. Bill was educated in District of Columbia public schools and was 15 years old when World War II began in 1941. Prior to the war, he often accompanied his father as he traveled by car with the Washington Hillssdales, a Negro League baseball team, for which the elder Fauntroy played center-field and his namesake served for many years as a “bat boy”.

Upon turning 16, Bill applied for a job with the Federal Government and went to work with his father at the U.S. Patent Office as a Copy Puller. The next year, he was promoted to Library Assistant in the Scientific Library, where he worked until volunteering for the U.S. Army Air Corps Reserves on February 1, 1944. On May 16, 1944, he was inducted into the Army Air Corps at Camp Lee in Petersburg, VA. After completing Basic Training at Keesler Field, MS, he was assigned to Tuskegee Army Air Field in July, 1944 as a Pre-Aviation Cadet.

In May of 1945, he was placed in Class 45-I-SE for training as a single engine pilot, which included 10 weeks of Pre-flight Training, 10 weeks of Primary Flying, 10 weeks of Basic Flying, and 10 weeks of Advanced Flying. After completing three-fourths of his total Flying Training, WWII ended. All aviation cadets were declared “surplus,” and given the choice of remaining in the service or of being discharged. Bill chose to be discharged from Andrews Army Air Base as an Aviation Cadet on November 8, 1945.

In 1946, he returned to work in the Scientific Library of the U.S. Patent Office, later resigning to enroll in the Armstrong Veterans High School to complete his high school requirements. After completing high school, he enrolled at Howard University’s School of Engineering and Architecture in the fall of 1946, intending to become a civil engineer. While at Howard University, he met and later married Camilla H. Bradford on June 18, 1949.

In the summer of 1948, Bill began a long association with the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey as a Cartographic Draftsman of aeronautical charts. After three years, he was promoted to Cartographer, where he maintained an assigned group of facility charts for the southeast section of the United States. As part of his duties in this position, corrections, additions, and revisions to the aeronautical radio aids data were performed monthly.

In 1956, Bill’s wife encouraged him to complete his college studies, so he did. In June, 1960, he received his Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from Howard University. In 1961, he became the first Black Civil Engineer hired by the National Capital Transportation Agency (NCTA), the agency responsible for preparing the November 1962 report for President Lyndon B. Johnson on the feasibility of a 100-mile rail transportation system for the Washington Metropolitan Area. This Authorized Regional System is now known as METRO.

When the NCTA was abolished in 1967, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA) was formed to take over the planning, design, construction, and operation of this new rail system. Bill was promoted to Urban Planner for the portion of the subway system that was to be built in the District of Columbia (DC). He was responsible for the planning of alignments and stations in DC, and made numerous daytime and evening presentations in the various communities, at public hearings, to the METRO Board of Directors, and to the DC Government. As a *Washington Post* article by Jack Eisen in 1984 noted, “There’s probably nothing about the subway [METRO] within the District [DC] that doesn’t somehow involve Bill’s [Fautroy] imprint.”

Bill was often mistaken for his younger brother Walter, a civil rights activist and the first delegate from the District of Columbia to the U.S. House of Representatives. Although the brothers looked and sounded alike, Bill was a force in his own right in shaping the city of Washington, DC. As the brothers were active at the same time, Walter was often described as “the political brother,” while Bill was known as “the transit professional brother”. Bill was one of the very first passengers on board when METRO opened in 1971. His brother Kenneth also worked for METRO in technology, and his brother Walter at one time served as Chairman of the METRO Board.

Bill enjoyed his work with WMATA immensely, and continued working with the organization as a consultant from his retirement in November, 1984 until 1999. He gave up smoking a pipe in 1990, having amassed a collection of over 100 different styles of pipe that he still proudly owns. Another little-known fact is that Bill and Camilla owned the famed Cardozo Sisters hair salon in NW DC from the mid-1970s until the late 1990s. Camilla was already working as Assistant Manager at Cardozo Sisters so Bill could continue his studies. Bill later joined her there as a janitor. When the opportunity presented itself to purchase the business, they jumped at the chance. Bill is also a Life Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), National Capital Section.

Bill, Camilla, and their son, Burlock V. Wells, were avid travelers. One of their favorite destinations was Cape Cod. In the latter years of their marriage, Camilla was stricken with Multiple Sclerosis, and Bill was her primary caregiver, lovingly attending to her every need. Bill and Camilla were blissfully married for 61 years, 11 months, and 15 days until her passing in 2011. Bill remains very close to Burlock, who lives with and helps care for Bill.

Bill is a beloved, long-time member of New Bethel Baptist Church in Washington, DC. His membership in the East Coast Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. (ECCTAI) has given him great joy, as he loves to go on speaking engagements with his “buddies” [other ECCTAI DOTAs], where they tell their stories and promote the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen. Bill was among the DOTAs honored by President Bush in 2007 at the Tuskegee Airmen Congressional Gold Medal Award Ceremony at the U.S. Capitol. He was also thrilled to meet President and Mrs. Obama at a special screening of the movie “Red Tails” at the White House in 2012. He still talks about the hug he received from First Lady Michelle Obama as one of the highlights of his life.

During the pandemic year of 2021, Bill was honored on the occasion of his 95th birthday with a Motor Parade organized by ECCTAI that featured over 60 cars of family, friends, and neighbors.

MILITARY LOCATIONS / ASSIGNMENTS

Camp Lee, VA
Keesler Field, MS
Tuskegee Army Air Field, AL

MILITARY SERVICE

1-Feb-1944 through 8-Nov-1945

CIVILIAN AWARDS / HONORS

Congressional Gold Medal (awarded collectively)



William T. Fautroy, Jr. at age 87