



BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

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

Mr. Herbert C. Thorpe



Mr. Herbert Thorpe was born in New York City and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He attended Brooklyn Public Schools and graduated from High School in 1940. He enrolled in the U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and served in camps at Van Etten, NY; Camden, NY; and Beltsville, MD from 1940 to 1942.

In 1942, Mr. Thorpe enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves and attended U.S. Signal Corps School in Troy, NY until the Spring of 1943. Mr. Thorpe began his active duty service at military basic training in June 1943 at Ft. Dix, NJ and Keams Field, Utah. While in Utah, he applied and was accepted for Aviation Cadet School in December 1943. From Utah, he was sent to Keesler Field, Biloxi, MS, in 1944, where he completed altitude testing. In January 1944, he transferred to Aviation Cadet School, at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. After completing Primary Flight School at the Institute, he was transferred to Basic Training Flight School at Tuskegee Army Air Field (TAAF) and was selected with others, for Multi-Engine training. In mid-1944, he was transferred to Gunnery School at Tyndall Field, FL, then to Bombardier/Navigator School at Midland Army Air Field, Texas.

Commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, Navigator/Bombardier, December 30, 1944, Midland, TX, 2nd Lt Thorpe returned to Tuskegee and began Advanced Flight Training school and qualified as a B-25 (Twin-engine) Pilot at TAAF in October 1945. He remained at TAAF and left the service in August 1946. He returned to Brooklyn to attend New York University under the GI Bill and graduated as an Electrical Engineer in 1953. From 1955-59, he was employed as a Radar Systems Engineer at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. In the Fall of 1959, he went to Rome, NY, to work as a Radar Research Engineer in Beacon Systems at Rome Air Development Center, Griffiss AFB. He partially retired in 1983. From 1984-1997, he served as a part time Counselor at Mohawk Valley Community College, Utica, NY.

Mr. Thorpe's community involvement included his service as a 50-year Member, First Presbyterian Church, Rome; Charter Member, Secretary & Past President; Rome Branch NAACP Charter Member & Secretary; Former Prince Hall Military Lodge No. 112 Charter Member; Secretary, Afro-American Heritage Association, Rome; Charter Member, Past President, Secretary; Mohawk Valley Frontiers Club Past Member, Advisory Board; Oneida County Office for the Aging Member and a Member of the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. (TAI), Claude B. Govan Tri-State Chapter, NY. He was presented with the 1st New York State Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award in 2012 and in 2013, the Rome Historical Society 1777 Medal of Honor Award.

Mr. Thorpe was married 65 years to Jessie M. Shorts of Bronx, NY and Waynesboro, VA. They had 2-children (Jessica, Buffalo, NY and R. Clifton, Nitro, WV), 4-granddaughters: Maisha, Brooklyn, NY, Stephanie, Natalie and Leslie, Nitro, WV and Washington, DC; one grandson: Kahlil, Buffalo, NY; one great-grandson: Gibran, Brooklyn, NY and one great-granddaughter: Azariah Marie, Brooklyn, NY. He was preceded in death by his Brother Richard, also a DOTA and graduate of Class 44-I-SE, who died in Italy, April 1945.

To learn more about Mr. Herbert C. Thorpe, other Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen, please visit the Website at the following location: www.TuskegeeAirmen.org.

