

BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

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

Spann Watson



A native of Johnston, South Carolina, he moved to Lodi, New Jersey with his family in April 1927.

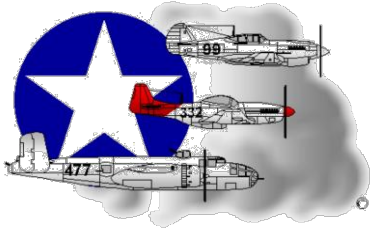
After graduating from Hackensack High School, Colonel Watson attended Howard University, where he studied mechanical engineering. He began his aviation training in 1939 in the College Pilot Training Program at Howard University and continued under the same program at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. In 1941, he joined the U.S. Army Air Corps as a flying cadet as part of the Tuskegee Air Airmen Experience and was an original member of the 99th Fighter Squadron. On July 8, 1943, Col. Watson was one of eight pilots who successfully fought the German Luftwaffe over the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Sicily. He also flew missions in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and Southern Europe.

In 1944 and 1945, the Army Air Force assigned Colonel Watson to the Combat Crew Training Center for Tuskegee Airmen, which was replacing pilots at Walterboro Army Airfield in Walterboro, South Carolina. Those pilots were training to join the 99th Squadron and the 332nd Fighter Group. Following the defeat of the Luftwaffe, the Army reassigned the 99th to Fort Knox, Kentucky, to train for the air war in the Pacific theater. At Fort Knox, Colonel Watson received orders to reassemble the 99th, which grew to 146 pilots and 14 flight leaders. The war on the Pacific came to an end after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Colonel Watson continued to play an important after the war as the United States began developing an integration plan for the Armed Forces that became the Nation's official policy. In recognition of his outstanding Accomplishment for the service and the Nation, his photograph along with other Tuskegee Airmen, hangs in the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

After 23 years of military service, he retired from the Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel. He joined the Federal Aviation Administration in 1965 as an equal opportunity specialist and continued to build a record of achievements as an air traffic control specialist. In 1971 the Department of Transportation awarded Colonel





BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

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

Watson with the Exceptional Service citation for his exceptional service toward achieving equal opportunity throughout the department.

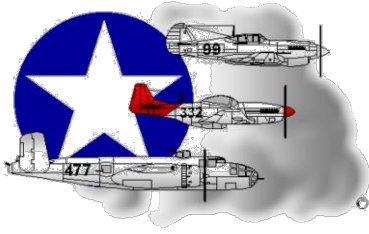
Throughout his career, he provided counsel and assistance to hundreds of military personnel as well as employees in the Federal Government and aviation industry. He was instrumental in helping hundreds of minorities gain employment, including 483 airline flight attendants and first-time pilots. As a strong supporter of professional careers for young people, he was for more than 30 youngsters winning appointment to the three primary service academies. Colonel Watson helped organize the Negro Airmen International (N.A.I), Inc. in Westbury, New York, in 1967 and served as its first vice president and a board member. Under his leadership, the various chapters of Tuskegee Airmen organized into a national organization. In 1974 the members elected him national president.

In 1985, he became president of the 2000 member Thomas W. Anthony Chapter of the Air Force Association serving Andrews A.F.B. and Prince George's County, Maryland. In 1987, as a result of his special assistance helping minorities and women gain employment and advancement in the aviation industry, he received the National Coalition of Black Federal Aviation Employees' C. Alfred Anderson Award. Colonel Watson's many honors include his election and induction as an "Elder Statesman of Aviation" by the National Aeronautic Association in 1991. He was the first Afro-American to receive those high honors.

In 1991 he received the Brigadier General Noel F. Parrish Award, the highest award presented by the Tuskegee Airman national organization. He was also the recipient of the National Headquarters' Air Force Association's President's Citation Award, its second-highest award. The Federal Aviation Administration awarded him for participating in Air Traffic operations supporting Desert Shield activity in the Middle East. Also, he was recognized by the Congressional Black Caucus as one of the surviving members of the original 99th Fighter Squadron.

In 1992, the Metro Dade County Airport Authority of Miami, Florida, and the Fourth Air Wing of the U.S. Air Force at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base in Goldsboro, North Carolina, honored him for his contributions to military and civil aviation. For more than 50 years of federal service, Colonel Spann Watson distinguished himself not only as a pioneering aviator but also as a dedicated activist who worked a lifetime to end racial discrimination and injustice.





BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

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

Colonel Watson has served as the National President of the Tuskegee Airmen Inc., which he helped to organize. When the Columbia Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen was granted its Charter on February 12, 2000, it was named and dedicated in honor of Colonel Spann Watson. On February 23, 2006, Tuskegee University, award him an Honorary Degree of Public Service. On March 29, 2007, Colonel Watson, along with 300 other Original Tuskegee Airmen received the Congressional Gold Medal award. Colonel Watson joined the Lonely Eagles on April 15, 2010.

