



# BIOGRAPHY

## A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

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



## PERRY H. YOUNG

Perry H. Young Jr. was not only a vital part of the Tuskegee Experience, he was also the world's first African-American airline pilot. It is a complex story, with several claimants to that title, though Young's ownership of the honor is uncontested.

In 1963, a pilot named Marlon Green was hired by Continental Airlines. When he reported for duty, it was painfully obvious that he was Black, and Continental un-hired him. Green sued Continental, and the case went to the Supreme Court, where Green won. Continental dutifully rehired him and also covered its bets by suddenly approving other African-American job applicants. The dam had burst, and the U.S. airline industry was finally open to Black Pilots--virtual descendants of the original Tuskegee Airmen. Before Green got a chance to fly for Continental, however, in 1964 American Airlines hired one David Harris, an experienced USAF B-52 Pilot who thus by luck of timing became the first African-American Pilot for a major trunk airline.

But wait: fully eight years earlier, in December 1956, a Helicopter Airline, New York Airways, had hired a former Oberlin College pre-med student and Tuskegee Airmen Civilian Flight Instructor, Perry Young, as a Co-Pilot on its big Sikorsky S-58 Helos. Within months, Young advanced to the Captain's Chair. As a resident of Pine Bush, NY, he later became a member of New York's Maj. Gen. Irene Trowell-Harris Chapter.

Although a Civilian, Young is considered to be a DOTA, just as Alfred "Chief" Anderson and Roscoe "Coach" Draper were who also hugely influenced Civilian Pilot Training Corps Instructors of future Tuskegee Airmen. Young had applied for admission to the U.S. Army Air Corps but was told that his services as a Civilian Instructor were vastly more important than any role as a Combat Pilot might have been.

After the war, Young worked as an Aircraft Mechanic in the Arctic, ran an air-taxi business in Haiti, flew in the Virgin Islands, and got a job as an Executive Pilot in Puerto Rico. The local water resources board needed a Helo Pilot and sent him to the Sikorsky factory, Stratford, Connecticut, to earn his commercial rotary-wing ticket. New York Airways (NYA) had been tracking Young's progress, for they were keen on the idea of hiring a Black Pilot, since baseball trailblazer Jackie Robinson was already a huge NYC hero. NYA flew only helicopters, and its few routes were between the helipad atop the Pan Am Building in Manhattan and New York's major airports, but it was inarguably a scheduled, passenger-carrying airline.

NYA got the publicity it had hoped Young would attract, and soon he and his helicopter were appearing in cigarette and razorblade ads aimed at an African-American audience. The tiny airline went out of business in 1979, but Young continued to fly as the Chief Pilot of a Long Island sightseeing-helicopter company until he was forced to retire as a Commercial Pilot at the age of 67. Young died in 1998, his car's license plate still bearing the phrase "MALGRETOUT" – French for "in spite of it all" – displaying the perseverance of a true Tuskegee Airman.

For more information on the Major General Irene Trowell-Harris Chapter, visit their website at [www.tai-ny.com](http://www.tai-ny.com).

