



BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

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MYRON “MIKE” WILSON (1916 - 2001)



The only child of Nora Day and Harry Wilson, Myron was born in Shawnee Town, Illinois, on April 13, 1916. At age 13, Myron lost his mother to tuberculosis when she was 29 years of age. Having no support of his father, Myron remained in care of his grandparents, Timothy and Elizabeth Day. As his grandfather's passing was close to his mother's, he assisted in financial support of his grandmother with part-time work as a mechanic at age 13. He, in turn, received the support of extended family members, primarily his aunt Anna Bowles (live-in cook and domestic worker for the wealthy Deitch Brothers family), his uncle Norman Day (the first black Captain of the Danville Fire Department in Illinois), and later his cousin John Dyer (laboratory denture technician and musician). Other family members include his cousin Milton Wilson, founder of the Howard University School of Business and the Texas Southern University School of Business.

When Myron was 14 years of age, his grandmother (a public school teacher and church pianist) taught him piano lessons, after which he began tuning pianos for extra income at age 15. Subsequently, at age 16, he learned the trade of tailoring, on which he relied as a regular source of income through Lawson's Tailoring in Danville, Illinois.

In 1936, at 20 years of age, Myron was the pianist and arranger of a 15-member band, The Dukes of Swing, which performed for Danville's early "Winter Frolics" (the group disbanded in 1950). Self-supporting during his college years, Myron matriculated at the University of Illinois, Champaign, majoring in mechanical engineering with a rigorous work and study schedule. A serious bout of pneumonia resulted in Myron leaving the University to focus on employment. As WWII broke out, the military began recruitment of "Negroes" into the Armed Services and on April 4, 1941, Myron joined the US Army Air Corps (per DD214).

Per Headquarters Air Corps Technical School Chanute Field, Illinois, Special Orders No. 263, he initially was assigned to the 99th Pursuit Squadron as a Private (effective date November 5, 1941; actual transfer on

November 7, 1941, from Chanute Field, Rantoul, Illinois to Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama), providing support as an Aircraft Mechanic. On October 5, 1943 Myron started Pilot Training with class 44-D, going through Pilot Cadet Training as a Sergeant. By November 22, 1944, he was assigned to the 302nd Fighter Squadron stationed at Ramitelli Air Base in Italy, per Myron's Pilot Log Book. A year and three months later, February 24, 1945, he was reassigned from the 302nd Fighter Squadron to the 100th Fighter Squadron, per the "Morning Report" Ramitelli Air Field, Italy. Myron's Pilot Log Book records his participation in monumental missions such as "The Berlin Mission," documenting "March 24, 1945, Encountered Two German Jets" and "Destruction of an ME 262 with wingman Earl Lane" (recounted by Myron in a video-recording available via YouTube, produced by his son Raymond Wilson, a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Deputy). Second Lieutenant Myron Wilson's Certificate of Valor cites 47 aerial combat missions over enemy territory, with Commendation for Efficiency, an Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, and campaign medals for "European-African-Middle Eastern Bronze Stars for Balkans, Germany, Southern France, Apennines, and Po Valley Campaigns." Myron developed fluency in German and Japanese languages; both of which he immensely enjoyed speaking. Eclipsing it all, his most prized possession was a pair of boots he acquired in April 1945 that were formerly worn by Wendell O. Pruitt prior to his demise during a flight training exercise.

In 1950, Myron led his class at the U.S. Air Force Technical School, Chanute Air Force Base, Illinois, with a scholastic average of 4.1 in the "Airplane Power Plant Mechanic, Specialized B-3350 Course," and was recognized for "outstanding performance of academic duties." He served in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean Conflict (June 25, 1950, to July 27, 1953) and was honorably discharged from the Air Force Reserve September 28, 1956 (per DD256 AF), with the rank of First Lieutenant. Though he rarely spoke of his Tuskegee Experience, if prompted to share he became visibly animated in relating that era's excitement and frustrations.

Despite demonstrated success in flying while engaged in combat, Myron was unsuccessful in securing jobs he sought with commercial airlines after his service in the U.S. Air Force. In 1958, he relocated from the state of Colorado to California. His post-war occupations ranged from Aircraft Mechanic/Engineer (Vandenberg Air Force Base, Edwards Air Force Base, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics), to Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, and construction/carpentry.

Myron was to marry twice in his lifetime. In 1942 he married Clovis Parks (1923-2012), crowned "Miss Danville 1936" for her beauty, and to them were born Loretta, Nora, John, and Myron. In 1958, his union with Isidora Ybarra Yslas brought him daughters Velen and Linda, after which he fathered Rosanna, Norman, Lolita, Raymundo/Raymond, Angelo, Angelyna, Mario, Myron Jr., and Anna.

A member of the Bahá'í Faith, Myron valued people of diverse ethnicities, and was a person of varied interests spanning music, mechanics, classic auto/truck restoration, carpentry, drafting, architecture, landscaping, horticulture and agriculture. Across time, he appeared most at home in rural environs, in a home structure he built or worked-on himself, with trees and a garden he planted and tended himself, as well as vehicles in varying stages of repair/restoration.

After Myron's death due to complications related to a brain tumor, the following was written of him by his daughter Rosanna's mother-in-law (Dorothy Elaine Beaumont) upon Mrs. Beaumont viewing Myron's military photograph. Although inspired by one man's photograph, these words bespeak the multitude of Tuskegee Airmen.

In Memoriam of Mr. Myron Wilson

In his eyes I saw tenderness that caressed his face and mien
That cradled firmness nonetheless in every stalk and vein

In his eyes I saw history in clarity loud detailed
That cherished grief and victory and all that curt life entailed

In his eyes I saw willingness to ably sustain the cost
Of famine grief and death no less, of sharp zest or visions lost

In his eyes I saw calm patience to fully wait a puzzle out
To forego gift and eminence, but firm fight with valor stout

In his eyes I saw victory perceived by wisened skill
Quiet triumphs in history, zealous interests grown by will

In his eyes I saw wisdom bare that seldom talked of flaws in men
Lonely grown in conflict rare but borne in fact and less of pen.

To forego gift and eminence but firm fight with valor stout
To loudly cheer for good conscience but cry against the cheapened bout

In his eyes I saw victory perceived by wisened skill
Quiet triumphs in history, zealous interests grown by will.

by Dorothy E. Beaumont

