



BIOGRAPHY

A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

**Tuskegee Airmen Inc. Public Relations, P.O. Box 830060
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JAMES EDWARD TALTON



Enlisted Service No.: 32953957
Flight Officer Service No.: T-136691

“From high school to flight school” was a slogan that the U.S. Army advertised for many years as an inducement to draw recruits to its aviation branch. The opportunity to become a military pilot without a college degree still exists in today’s Army, whereby flight school graduates become warrant officers and rank separately between enlisted personnel and commissioned officers. A similar rank called flight officer was approved by Congress in May 1942 in order to mobilize large numbers of personnel to fill what had traditionally been commissioned aircrew positions (pilots, navigators, and bombardiers) in the Air Corps and later Army Air Force. When the pool of candidates meeting the original requirements of 21 years old and two years of college was not enough to meet demands, the age requirement was reduced to 18 and training opened to anyone who could pass the entrance tests. Personnel meeting these new requirements and who completed training graduated as flight officers. This opportunity yielded a number of high-performing individuals, including war ace and renowned test pilot Chuck Yeager. Another member of this group, James E. Talton, distinguished himself in service to his country as well as in a postwar career in which he excelled scholastically and also helped others to achieve their educational goals.

James was born in Camden County, NJ, on December 19, 1924. He enlisted into the U.S. Army in Camden, NJ, on July 7, 1943, and listed his hometown as Merchantville, NJ. At some point afterwards he tested high enough to be accepted for training as a bombardier in the 477th Bombardment Group, a segregated unit training for combat in B-25 aircraft. He completed the 29-week Aerial Observer (Bombardier) course and graduated in class 44-B-5 at Midland AAF, TX, on October 10, 1944.

James appears to have worked in his role for just a short time, as he took advantage of an opportunity to become a pilot in his new unit. After what was usually a 40-week course, he graduated in class 45-F-TE at Tuskegee AAF, AL, on September 8, 1945. However, the war with Japan officially ended that same month, which put a stop to plans for the reorganized 477th Composite Group to carry out combat missions after deploying to the Pacific Theater. As a result, he was discharged on an unknown date after the cessation of hostilities.

Like many veterans, James began to prepare for a postwar career by going to college under the G.I. Bill. After being accepted at Glassboro State College (today’s Rowan University) in his home state of New Jersey, he flourished academically as evidenced by making the Dean’s List in three consecutive years. He also made time for extracurricular activities that included playing varsity baseball and writing for the school’s student-run newspaper called The Whit, which covers campus news, sports, and local events in the South Jersey area.

After completing his undergraduate degree James worked as a teacher in public schools in Camden, NJ, as well as in nearby Delaware at Wilmington’s P.S. DuPont High School, Claymont High School in Claymont, DE, and at Conrad Intensive Learning Center. He was a noted designer of educational materials at each of these facilities.

Because education was very important to him, James continued his own personal enrichment with additional course work at Cheyney State College (now Cheyney University) in Pennsylvania and completed postgraduate studies at Glassboro State College and the University of Delaware.

In his 25 years of residence in the Wilmington, DE area, James was a devoted member of the city's Westminster Presbyterian Church, where he served as an usher and deacon. He also worked to preserve and share the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen, including his first-hand experience, as a member of the John H. Porter-First State Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. based in Dover, DE.

James Edward Talton joined the "Lonely Eagles Chapter" on September 17, 1997, at 72 years of age.

