

VFW Recognizes Gen. Daniel 'Chappie' James Jr.

James rose to the rank of general in 1975 becoming the first African American to achieve the grade of four-star general in the U.S. military

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Today, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) recognizes the distinguished career of U.S. Air Force Gen. (ret.) Daniel “Chappie” James Jr.

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Gen. Daniel "Chappie" James Jr.

James, a native of Pensacola, Florida, attended and graduated from the famous Tuskegee Institute in 1942. After graduation, he remained at Tuskegee as a civilian instructor pilot in the Army Air Corps training African-American pilots of the 99th Pursuit Squadron during World War II.

After completing P-40 Warhawk training and then B-25 Mitchell training, James served as a B-25 pilot with the 617th Bomb Squadron of the 477th Bomb Group at Godman Army Airfield and Lockbourne Army Airfield from January 1944 until the conclusion of World War II.

During his esteemed military career, James served in three conflicts – World War II, the Korean War and the Southeast Asia War earning the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Air Force Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross,

Meritorious Service Medal and U.S. Air Force Command Pilot Badge.

James rose to the rank of general in 1975 becoming the first African American to achieve the grade of four-star general in the U.S. military.

James died of a heart attack Feb. 25, 1978, three weeks following his retirement from the Air Force. He rests in Arlington National Cemetery.

This is part of a series of VFW feature articles to be published throughout February 2020, highlighting African-American veterans who have made outstanding contributions to our military and society.