

Retired Major, Tuskegee Airman Dies at 88

Updated: Nov 26, 2007 11:07 PM CST



Carroll Woods, Sr. and his son.

To everyone else, he was a "Redtail," a Tuskegee Airman, but for Carroll Woods, Jr., he was just "dad."

"He was the guy that tossed the baseball and threw the football with you," Woods explained.

Packing old trinkets and memorabilia at his father's Montgomery home, each picture reminded Woods of the legacy his father left behind--a legacy he knew very little

about as a child.

"I didn't know that he was in the Air Force and had fought 100 combat missions and was shot down and a prisoner of war because [the airmen] didn't talk about it," Woods said.

One of twelve children, Major woods grew up on a Georgia farm and eventually found his way into the Army Air Corps.

Soon, he became a pilot in one of the most influential squadrons in aviation history.

"He thought he had an opportunity, and he qualified for the program. Next thing he knew, he was in Tuskegee learning how to fly," Woods explained.

Woods' plane was shot down over Greece in October 1944. He was a prisoner of war until April 1945 when Gen. George Patton and his army reached the POW camp in Greece.

After years of distinguished military service and sixth months as a prisoner of war, Woods says his father never boasted about his accomplishments.

"They went off to war to prove a point and do their job, they didn't go out to be heroes," but that's what they became.

Years later, the group received praise, even Congressional medals for their service.

With thanks long overdue, even Major Woods himself enjoyed the attention.

"It took a long time before we got any recognition, and now we have all sorts of recognition and I'm elated," Woods, Sr. told WSFA 12 News in a 2005 interview.