

Robert Weldon Lawrence

Bob Lawrence was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, June 12, 1922 to Joshua E. Lawrence and Louise Hill Lawrence. He grew up in several cities where his father was employed as a minister. After high school, he enlisted as one of the original members of the 99th Pursuit Squadron of the US Army Air Corps. From the rank of Private, he advanced to the rank of Captain, and was a fighter pilot serving in combat in the European Theater in World War II. The 332nd Fighter group was trained at Tuskegee, Alabama, and earned the name of the "Tuskegee Airmen" as the first all black pilots in the armed services.

After serving his country, Bob married Mary Elizabeth Rickards, an Air Force nurse, and moved to California where they attended San Jose State University and became parents of two children. Following ten years of private practice as a Public accountant, he devoted twenty-six years to public education as a teacher, counselor, and school administrator. He served his final four working years as Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction in the State of California, Department of Education.

In 1980 Bob and his wife Ernestine (Tina), retired to Santa Fe where he became involved in many volunteer activities to fill up the time when he was not playing golf. Those volunteer activities included; Senior Warden of St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Fairview Cemetery Preservation Association, Hospice Advisory Board, Treasurer of the Charles 'Cocoa' Maxwell Memorial Scholarship Fund.

In 2001 he was selected as a "Santa Fe Living Treasure". In 2006 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Tuskegee University and earlier this year he received the Congressional Gold Medal in Washington, D.C.

Bob died peacefully at home on November 8, 2007. His incredible spirit, his life of Faith in Action, his devotion to his family and friends, his strong sense of duty, his great smile and love of golf serve as an example to all of a life well lived. He will be greatly missed.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his first wife, 'Ricky', his son Gregory Weldon Lawrence; brothers Paul, Joshua, Norman and sister, Eva.

He is survived by his wife Tina; his brother Richard Lawrence of Dover, DE, and his sister Dorothy Gantz of North Highlands, CA; Sisters in law: Victoria Lawrence of NYC, NY; Vivian Lawrence of Sacramento, CA; daughter Judith Lawrence of Chico, CA, Daughter-in-law, Claudia Lawrence of Milpitas, CA; Stepchildren: Tracy and Timothy Jernigan of Knoxville, TN, and Gia Jernigan of Nashville, TN; Grandson Robert Lawrence and wife Penny of Los Gatos, CA; ten nieces and nephews and seven step grandchildren