

Dr. William Neal Brown



William Neal Brown, 90, died on Friday, April 17, at his home in Millburn. He lived in Montclair for nearly 50 years before moving to Millburn in 2004.

Dr. Brown grew up near Pittsburgh where his father worked in a steel mill. The valedictorian of his graduating class, he had no money for college and joined the Civilian Conservation Corps, a New Deal public works program. He eventually joined a program at Hampton University where he worked during the day and took college classes at night. He received an undergraduate degree from Hampton University, a master's degree from Columbia University, and a doctorate in philosophy from City University of New York.

Dr. Brown, a Tuskegee Airman, was the first African American hired to the faculty of Rutgers University. He taught human growth and development at Rutgers School of Social Work for 33 years. Vice President Joe Biden was a student of Dr. Brown's in the 1960s.

In November 1961 Dr. Brown held a one-on-one debate with Malcolm X on the Newark campus of Rutgers University. The topic was integration versus black separatism.

Dr. Brown served on the Rutgers University faculty for 41 years. He was inducted into the Rutgers Oral History Archives.