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His blood runs in the veins of our two sons.

We have just completed another Black History Month and the talk and remembrance of the Tuskegee Airman revved up to great heights once again. This year at the end of March the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II will receive the Congressional Gold Medal.

This will make us all very proud.

This talk and ceremony gets very personal to me.

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He, more importantly, conceived and raised the most beautiful woman to ever walk this earth – my Kay.

His blood runs in the veins of our two sons.

His personal story belongs to me and a few others.

A “Hero”?

Yes indeed.

Pops, Charles Henry DeBow Jr., never really talked much about his war experiences. I noticed early that there was something eating away and he would gloss it over when approached.

Kay fell in love with me partly because Pops and I were so similar.

While in a restaurant she revealed to me her affections and stated “Now, its time for you to talk to the other man in my life”.

She escorted me to a pay phone and called her father.

During our first conversation he said, “Kay tells me you have some military experience when we

physically meet let's compare notes".

Not long after, I had the opportunity to hear Charles DeBow's reflections of his experience as a Tuskegee Airman and the treatment this country gave its Black veterans of World War II. I took him up to the roof of our Detroit apartment.

It was just him, me, two glasses and a bottle of Jack Daniels.

We sat overlooking the beautiful Detroit River and Belle Isle Park.

There, for three hours, I heard it all coming from this hero's heart.

He had a strong affinity for flying all his life. He earned his pilot license before finishing high school. He, like the other three original Tuskegee Airmen, was a pilot prior to the formal military training.

They came ready.

The Tuskegee Airmen were well motivated and anxious to get into the fighting. They had a little activity in Northern Africa but the real test came in Italy.

When General Patton led our troops onto Sicily, they encountered a major challenge.

The Nazis assembled a formidable counter attack with fierce artillery bombardment.

We couldn't move another inch.

As documented on the Military Channel and Fox News War Stories, it was the Tuskegee Airmen who wiped out the German artillery units and freed our troops from harms way.

From there the beginning of the end of the war began.

There is film that shows the return of the Tuskegee Airmen from that heroic bombing raid.

The first plane lands and out pops Charles DeBow in all his glory.

Man that makes my family so proud to see over and over again.

One of the commanding generals sent a message to “thank those colored pilots for saving the battle”.

From Sicily and the mainland of Italy, they went to southern France and knocked out the German radar stations that supported the Normandy beaches. Without the success of this, there would not have been a D-Day.

Not much is said about this exploit as well as the aggressive action in Italy.

They want us to think that the Tuskegee Pilots simply escorted bombers back and forth and protected them from enemy planes.

Oh yes, they did this but there were so much more challenging actions to credit them with.

During the war, our pilots had to eat in the kitchen with the cooks as Blacks were barred from the dining area. German officers, prisoners of war, ate in the dining area but not our Black pilots/officers.

After the war the insults from a mentally defective nation continued. Charles DeBow returned to Indianapolis and was forced to stand in the rain while in uniform at the train station as “No Negroes Allowed in the Waiting Lounge”.

He was denied rooms at prominent Detroit hotels despite wearing a uniform with captain bars and aviation wings.

He forced his way into the Indiana University via the GI Bill of Rights but had to stay in a trailer off campus with all the other Black GI's because the dorms were for whites only.

Despite it all he rose academically and trail blazed the civil rights action in Indianapolis. He was an American who served his country through 52 combat missions.

His only regret was the loss of 66 fellow Tuskegee pilots.

Tears rolled down his face as he remembered his buddies who fell one by one in defense and

honor of their nation.

They were all heroes.

I thank God for the opportunity to have known and loved one of them.