

On December 18, 1912 Benjamin Oliver Davis Junior was born. This African American has contributed greatly in time of war. First, during World War II he commanded the Tuskegee Airman, the first African-American military aviators in the United States Armed Forces. Then in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, he commanded the 51st Fighter Wing. After growing up in Washington D.C., he decided to go to West Point. Being black, at West Point, he was ostracized, never having a roommate and rarely being talked to. After a long four years, he graduated 35th in his class out of 275, becoming the 4th black graduated from West Point following Henry Ossian Flipper, John Hanks Alexander, and Charles Young.

I think that one of Benjamin greatest achievement was as the commander of the Tuskegee Airman, the first African American aviators in the armed forces, in World War II. Flying the P-39, Curtiss P-40, P-47, and P-51 Mustang, the Tuskegee airman escorted bombers into Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland, and Germany. This group, also known as the “Red Tails,” was extremely successful. They shot down 111 enemy fighter planes while losing 66 of their own fighters and 25 bombers.

Benjamin Davis left a great legacy. He was the second colored man to become a general. His father was the first. He also has barracks named after him on the West Point campus. At the ceremony, the West Point Superintendent, Lieutenant General Robert L. Caslen, said “His name, etched here in stone, is a perpetual reminder of his incredible legacy and example that will inspire all future leaders of character that pass through West Point’s gates.”

Benjamin life story is inspiring from start to finish. He started at West Point where he endured many difficulties because of the color of his skin. In the end, he left a great legacy because of his contributions to the defense of our country through three wars.