

Wilbur Franklin Long

Military/Businessman

Wilbur Franklin Long was born in Charlottesville , VA on March 16, 1920, the second of three children born to Rev. Clarence M. and Mrs. Maude (Hilton) Long. After a brief residence in Norfolk the family settled in New Jersey where he graduated from East Orange High School in 1937. Later that year the family moved to St. Louis, Mo where Wilbur and his older brother, Clarence M. Long, Jr. attended Stowe Junior College before transferring to Lincoln University where Wilbur majored in mathematics. He was among the first cadets to enroll in Lincoln's Civil Pilots Training program and the first to fly solo. He left Lincoln University at the end of his junior year to continue flying lessons in Chicago, IL. After enlisting in the Army Air Corps, he received most of his military training at Moten Field at Tuskegee Institute. He graduated in the Class 44B on February 8, 1944 and was commissioned as a fighter pilot. Later that year he was deployed to Italy with the 32nd Pursuit Squadron which escorted B-24 and B-17 bombers.

Lt. Long's P-51 plane was shot down over Hungary on September 13, 1944. He was forced to crash-land, gashing his nose on the instruments in the process. For this injury he later received the Purple Heart, along with numerous other military decorations, medals, and honors for his outstanding service as a Tuskegee Airman. First reported missing in action, he was later discovered to be a prisoner of war in Germany in Stalag Luft III , Stalag VII-A and other prison camps to which he was forced to march. The Russian army liberated him on April 29, 1945. Lean and infested with lice, he was wearing the same clothing in which he had been captured seven months earlier.

After his liberation, 1st Lt. Long settled in New Rochelle, NY where he met and married Katie Butler. Of this union were born two daughters, Kathy and Karen. Deciding to be a printer rather than mathematics teacher, he completed his education at Hampton Institute. For many years he owned and operated his own printing company. He was later employed by The Standard Star newspaper. Long died in New Rochelle on February 21, 1998.