



Lawrence Brooks

Sep 12, 1909 - Jan 5, 2022

SOLDIER DETAILS

HIGHEST RANK: Private First Class

DIVISION: Army, African American 91st Engineer Battalion

THEATER OF OPERATION: European

HONORED BY: The Eisenhower Foundation

BIOGRAPHY

Lawrence Brooks was born 09/12/1909, one of fifteen children in rural Louisiana. He was drafted into the US Army a few weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor at age 31. The military was racially segregated at this time. Brooks noted the blacks had tents and the whites had tents, they were next to each other. Brooks spent his military time serving largely in African American 91st Battalion stationed in Australia New Guinea and the Philippines. For much of that time, Brooks was a driver, valet and cook for three officers, two lieutenants and a captain. He also helped build bridges, roads, and airstrips. He earned the rank of Private 1st class. Brooks described his experience in Australia at a level of freedom he'd never experienced before. The country had an acceptance of Black soldiers. On a flight to pick up supplies between Australia and New Guinea, an engine failed on Brooks' plane while flying over the ocean. Soldiers began throwing out cargo to compensate for the loss of power but Brooks moved to stand by the pilots explaining, they were the only men on the plan with parachutes, and if he saw them running by, he was going to hang on as they went out the door, Brooks was discharged in August 1945. He married and had a family, working as a forklift operator until retiring. Brooks lived to be 112 years old. Courtesy of npr.org