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Tuskegee Airman who was Dubuque native honored at city's airport

JULY 19, 2022 BY [RADIO IOWA CONTRIBUTOR](#)

The main terminal at the Dubuque Regional Airport has been named in honor of a man who helped desegregate the U.S. military.

Captain Robert L. Martin was born in Dubuque in 1919 and was one of the original members of the Tuskegee Airmen, a World War II unit of black pilots.



Photo by Dubuque Regional Airport

"At the time, people in the military were in debate and argument over whether Black Americans could be successful as officers in the military," Dawnelle Gordon, chair of the Martin Commemoration Committee, said.

Captain Martin graduated from Dubuque Senior High School, and studied engineering in Ames at what was then called Iowa State College. He was one of 12 Tuskegee Airmen from Iowa.

"They stepped up to serve this country during a time when they had few opportunities, even worse adversity than today," Gordon said, "but they wanted to serve this country they wanted to protect the United States and its freedom."

Gordon said convincing local officials to name the terminal for Martin was easy, but it was harder to raise the money to pay for an exhibit and for signs at the airport. Donations totaled \$80,000.

The Air Force was the first branch of the military to integrate, starting in 1949. Colonel Martin received the Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, the Air Medal with 6 Oak Leaf Clusters for his actions during World War II. The Tuskegee Airmen, as a group, received the Congressional Gold Medal, in 2007. After the war, Martin worked as an electrical engineer in Chicago. He died July 26, 2018 at the age of 99.

(Reporting by Herb Trix, WVIK, Quad Cities)

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