

National

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Press Release

OBITUARY ANNOUNCEMENT

Luke Leo House, Jr.

December 26, 1924 – January 18, 2019

The Great Migration of African Americans to the west beginning in the 1920's brought Luke Leo House, Sr., a chauffeur, formerly of Texas and his wife Ruth Morgan Young, a housekeeper, born in Connecticut to Los Angeles. Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&R's) prohibited black families from living west of Main Street in L.A. Undaunted, Luke and Ruth purchased property on the eastside of the Los Angeles.

Luke House, Jr. was the middle child born on December 26, 1924. He and his older sister Bettie and his younger brother Gerald grew up in L.A. The only high school for blacks was Thomas Jefferson, however, Ruth House wanted her son, Luke to attend the all-white John H. Francis Polytechnic High School, where her employer worked as an administrator. She approached him on her son's behalf, and he invited Luke for an entrance interview. Luke was accepted, but there was one condition: Luke needed to find an aeronautics employer willing to hire him upon his graduation. Luke found Skippy Smith, Manager of the Pacific Parachute Company, a minority subcontractor, willing to vouch for him. Luke later found out that none of the other students had a requirement of employment prior to approval for admission. Luke not only completed the courses but graduated top of his class. A fact not wasted by Polytechnic administration as they were proud to flaunt their first black student for his accomplishments.

Shortly after graduation Luke was drafted into the military. The day he went to the draft board he was instructed to go to the U.S. Marine Corps located in another building. This came as a surprise to Luke because he knew there were no black men in the Marine Corps. He was sent to Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. Luke recounted that during a field inspection on the base, the Commandant speaking to the troops said "As I look out on this vast field and I see you people – in my Marine Corps I know we must be at war." Luke was one of the first Radar Operators black or white. Radar at that time was the U.S. secret weapon to track enemy airplanes. He was sent to several islands in the South Pacific, Guam being the largest. He rose to the rank of corporal, during that time the highest rank a man of color could attain was sergeant. Luke was in charge of a crew of six men whose duties were to track enemy targets in order for anti-aircraft to shoot them down. Luke and his crew were part of the 20,000 first African American Marines that trained from 1942 to 1949 and finally received their long overdue recognition on June 27, 2012 for their bravery, valor and outstanding service as Montford Point Marines. Luke L. House, Jr. was awarded a Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor bestowed by the U.S. Congress.

After his military service, Luke returned to Los Angeles to the segregated eastside. To Central Avenue: the Dunbar Hotel (one of the few hotel for black travelers and performers to stay); Club Alabam, the Downbeat, and other nightclubs to see black entertainers; the California Eagle (the oldest black newspaper in the west); the Elk's Hall (for dining and dancing); Dolphin's of Hollywood record shop (possibly get an artist's autograph); the Lincoln Theatre or to the 28th Street YMCA, the only venues for black youth on the eastside.



Back home in L.A., Luke met and wed Violet Flournoy. With changes in the CC&R's they moved to Inglewood. Violet and Luke were married for 40 years until her death in 1989.

Luke and his sister Bettie were more than siblings, they were best friends. They shared a joy of life and quest for knowledge. The loved to watch TV shows like Jeopardy, 60 Minutes, and Sunday Morning, then call each other to discuss the programs. In their zeal to understand more about various religions and their own spirituality, they attended lectures by Aimee Semple McPherson, Jiddu Krishnamurti, and Ernest Holmes to name a few. They embraced the philosophy of the Science of Mind. Bettie and Luke believed in an infinite power that resides in all of us, always having a positive attitude about the world around them.

Luke began working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in the Food Safety and Inspection Service. Luke was the first Program Assistant in the Southern California area for inspection operations. In his position with department, Luke took advantage of every educational program that was offered to him during his employment with the Federal Government. Luke attended a grand total of 14 colleges and universities, some offering courses for certification and others leading to additional degrees. The list is impressive: East Los Angeles College, Cal State, L.A., El Camino College, The Ohio State University, The George Washington University, University of Washington, Texas A&M, Tuskegee University, Southwest Texas University, Kansas State University, Mississippi State University, West L.A. College, Los Angeles City College (AA), Goddard College (BA) and his beloved University of Southern California earning both a BS and a MS in Engineering. Wow!

While working for the USDA, Luke met his best friend for life Garling Theus. Each one always referred to the other as "Little Brother" because one was shorter and the other, because he was younger. Luke also met his future brother-in-law, Mark Corvera. Marcos and Lucas as they are called by family are hermanos de sangre (blood brothers). Above all else Luke's employment with the USDA afforded him the opportunity to meet the love of his life Raquel! His "Sweetie" – Mrs. Luke House...

Luke was also an award winning photographer, he won the 1961 Los Angeles Times "Amateur Photographer of the Year." He also taught computer classes to senior citizens, and speaking of teaching, he substituted for his Tai Chi master in his absence.

Funeral Service: Inglewood Mortuary - 1206 Centinela Avenue Inglewood, CA 90302

Monday January 28, 2019 10:00 a.m.