

## Jordan

He lived in a racist country but still fought for it. He was a member of an elite detachment called Smokejumpers, a unit of the all-black 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion nicknamed the Triple Nickels.

During World War II, Japan had a secret weapon called Fu-Go, fire balloons. They launched 9,300 balloons with ten incendiary bombs each into the upper west-to-east wind currents toward the United States. Three hundred or more reached and exploded in seventeen states as far east as Indiana. When the balloon bombs burst, the members of the 555th became the first military Smokejumpers to jump out of planes with full gear to extinguish the fires. To keep secret these dangerous missions (Operation Firefly) and the destruction caused by the Japanese weapons, the Army reported that lightning strikes were the cause of each fire. "On our first rappel down to the ground," Jordan recalls, "the Army misjudged the height of the 200-foot-high trees we landed in, and we were given only fifty feet of rope."

He returned home after the war to raise a family, become a teacher and coach. Taking the teamwork and discipline he learned as a member of the Triple Nickels, he inspired his students in their academic careers and led several high school football and track teams to state championships.

“I read an article about the magnificent feats the Triple Nickels performed, and I became a little angry. My father was a trail blazer, and I knew nothing about it. They were sworn to secrecy, and he kept that vow until the story began to be discussed nationally only a few years ago. As I have been exposed to the valor of these patriots, it makes me wonder how they remained loyal to an oath and to this country even though the country did not respect them as men, let alone as equals.

This loyalty explains much to me as I look at my father as a man. He was and is always the consummate gentleman, thinking of others before himself. In my fifty-plus years, I have never heard him curse or use a cross word toward anyone. He is always even tempered and level headed. In my mind, he is the personification of a saint. I appreciate the life lessons he taught me, and I strive to at least be able to carry his shoes because the ones he left me are way too big for a man like me to fill.

Jerome, Your Admiring Son



Jordan – World War II Smoke Jumper

“We loved our country and even when it did not love us back.”