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*CAP recognizes **Black History Month** by honoring the late Dr. Fabius "Jack" Fullwood Russell, former Ohio Wing cadet.*

Success Despite Adversity: The Perseverance of Dr. Fabius "Jack" Russell



Dr. Fabius "Jack" Russell

The summer of 1946 was full of opportunities for many Americans – especially if you were white and male. Service members were home from the war, and the economy had bounced back from the Great Depression.

In Youngstown, Ohio, an ambitious teenager joined a budding youth organization – the cadet program of Civil Air Patrol.

Fabius Fullwood Russell, known to his friends as Jack, was born July 18, 1929, in Youngstown. He was the eldest of three siblings, whose parents, Lee and Ethel Russell, raised them to be proud Americans and equally proud African Americans.

Russell was excited to belong to an organization that offered opportunities to everyone regardless of race. He joined the Youngstown Squadron already knowing over half of his fellow cadets, and he later wrote that he quickly became friends with the entire squadron. He had always been an intelligent young man, able to learn quickly, and he enjoyed the activities CAP offered.

In August 1947, he attended a two-week summer encampment. "There I enjoyed the best two weeks of my life, as I worked and played with C.A.P. personnel from all over the state of Ohio," he wrote.

The following year he applied to attend the Michigan Wing summer encampment at Selfridge Air Force Base. As the encampment date approached, however, he was informed he was denied attendance.

The Michigan Wing leaders wrote him not as "Jack" but as "Fabius Russell, Negro." Not only was the privilege of attending the encampment denied him, but also, he was informed he "could not even appear on the base on visitor's day," he wrote.

All African Americans were forbidden from attending the Michigan Wing encampment. Russell recalled the situation as "more of an injustice than the segregation that [he ran] into daily." Knowing that President Harry S. Truman had desegregated the U.S. military in July 1948, the 19-year-old wrote the president about the matter.

"I want to continue to prepare myself as a member of C.A.P. and will as near as possible, but I do believe that I should be permitted to participate in all of the activities that aid this preparation. I want to be as qualified as the next cadet and senior."

CAP, like the rest of America, consisted of individuals with varying personal prejudices, even though the organization had striven to be racially inclusive from its establishment in December 1941. From the start, its ranks included African American members, among them pilots who flew homeland defense missions during World War II.

In September 1948, Russell received a reply from the White House. "The President has a deep personal interest in seeing to it that persons like yourself are not denied an opportunity to join in activities that are shared by other citizens," the official correspondence said.

(Both Russell's handwritten message and the White House reply are on file at the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library)

Russell never attended another Civil Air Patrol encampment.

Dejected but not defeated, he went on to enlist in the U.S. Air Force. Airman 1st Class Russell served with the 6912th Radio Squadron (Mobile) of the U.S. Air Force Security Service, which was known to be composed of airmen selected from top enlisted recruits to serve in a secretive command of the Air Force tasked with monitoring, collecting and interpreting military voice and electronic signals of countries of interest.

The Security Service is the predecessor to today's 16th Air Force, which is responsible for information warfare, including intelligence gathering and analysis, surveillance, reconnaissance, and cyber and electronic warfare.

Russell served as a Russian language translator during the Korean War. He was honorably discharged in August 1956.

He harbored higher aspirations, and he believed education was the doorway to additional opportunities. He entered Youngstown University after his Air Force days. He focused hard on his studies, and he graduated in 1959 with a bachelor's in math.

Russell wanted to continue challenging himself and doing the best he could while serving others, and he was accepted to the Des Moines College of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery.

He graduated in 1963, becoming Fabius "Jack" Russell, DO, an osteopathic physician. He also chose to challenge himself even further and specialized in radiology, becoming the first recorded African American osteopathic radiologist.

He married and moved to Michigan to serve his community as a physician. He and his wife, Carletta, had three daughters – Linda, Sonja, and Heidi. Over the next 30-plus years, he practiced both radiology and general practice medicine in Flint and Saginaw. His daughters remember his emphasizing education as a key message to them and those he mentored over the years, saying, "Education is something no one can take from you."

He is remembered as a gifted, compassionate physician, loved by his patients and staff wherever he worked, because he always treated them with respect.

Russell and his wife retired to Las Vegas in 1996. He passed away at age 74 on Aug. 5, 2003, and rests at Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Boulder City.

The adversity Russell faced throughout his life stemmed from the racism systemically entrenched in the society he lived in. Despite this, he persevered to achieve great success. He asked only for an equal opportunity to succeed based on his abilities and character, and he worked hard to achieve his accomplishments.

In doing so, he broke racial barriers and perhaps changed some racial opinions.

Even as a young organization, Civil Air Patrol strove to recognize the value of individuals, regardless of race, by including them in every part of the program. Unfortunately, personal prejudices intruded at some local levels and resulted in acts of racism like that Russell experienced in 1948. CAP's growth over nearly 80 years has not occurred without such failures.

Today, CAP is dedicated to maintaining an inclusive and diverse environment. Leaders at all levels support this approach to ensure that no member ever faces a situation like Russell confronted as a cadet.

Civil Air Patrol also recognizes and honors the perseverance of individuals like Russell who, in the face of adversity, persevered through to success. Dr. Fabius "Jack" Russell serves as an example of living a life of service.

Exercise: Follow-up discussion questions:

1. Does CAP offer the same opportunities to all cadets and seniors?
2. What could be perceived as challenges to different ethnic, cultural or social economic backgrounds?
3. What can be added to CAP programs to be more representative of our membership ethnic and cultural backgrounds?
4. How would you feel if you were turned away from an event? How would you handle getting turned away?

Other Diversity and Inclusion Program News:

1. **Unit Identity Items Review:** General Smith has directed Wing and Region Commanders to work with group and unit commanders to examine all aspects of unit, group, and wing identity and recognition, both formal and informal, to include emblems, morale patches, mottos, nicknames, and coins, and web pages.
2. **Black History Month:** MAC published the article above. A suggestion was made last year to use these featured individuals and their stories as leadership topics at the units. Discussion questions could be used or create your own discussion questions. This is a way to integrate our special observances into training and leadership development.
3. **Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Inclusion Course:** To assist commanders in meeting the annual briefing requirement for EO, NHQ has developed this course for senior members that is now in Axis. Cadets receive EO training integrated into their training materials. This course is similar to the new module in Level I. I encourage each of you to take this course. Commanders and staff can pull a list of those who have completed the course under Member Reports/Training Report, then choosing the green check box next to the course name. Future improvements will allow a commander to give the course at a meeting and report attendance to meet the annual requirement. In the meantime, if you have a commander who gives the presentation you can send me a spreadsheet listing all participants' CAPIDs in a column. Please consolidate lists by wing so that the person who is uploading the data can do it all at once.
4. **Educational Accommodations Specialist:** NHQ Cadet Programs has Capt Wende Walsh on their staff as an educational accommodation's specialist. She is a great resource for discussion reasonable accommodations for educational needs. Wende has worked in this field for years. You can contact her through national cadet programs.
5. **Uniform waivers for Religious Obligations and Gender Dysphoria:** CAPR 39-1 includes the process to request uniform waivers. Note that these requests can only be disapproved by the CAP/CC and CAP-USAF/CC.
6. **Uniform changes:** The uniform board met recently and is preparing a request for additional changes to support diversity and inclusion. We have asked for CAP to adopt the recent Air Force changes (female hair length, female mess dress pants) and some existing Air Force allowances (shaving waivers for medical needs, maternity uniform). These are only requests at this time and need to go through CAP-USAF for approval, so nothing is official until then.

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