

James A. (Jim) Tilmon, Sr. Bio

Jim Tilmon was born and grew up in Oklahoma. Both his parents were educators. His family ancestry includes African-American, Native-American and Italian-American. As a boy, he always had a keen interest in flying and music. After completing his studies at Lincoln University in Missouri with a major in music and a minor in education, Jim served eight years in the United States Army in the Corps of Engineers flying both helicopters and fixed wing aircraft. Jim left the military with the rank of Captain. He then settled in the Chicago area as a pilot for American Airlines, flying the DC-6, DC-7, BAC-111 and Boeing 727. Part of his career with American included the position of instructor on the BAC-111. Jim was among the first five African-American pilots to be hired by a commercial airline in the United States. Jim has always been involved in community activities. One in particular was his participation in the Plans for Progress Task Force on Youth Motivation, a program instituted by then Vice-President Hubert Humphrey. The program's intent was to enlighten minority high school and college students concerning the expanding opportunities in industry, and to inspire them with the confidence to seek careers in areas they may not have thought possible. This and his other tireless work with minority youth across the nation won him the coveted American Airlines "Captain's Chair" award.

Also during Jim's 29 plus years with American, he spent 4 years with WTTW, the Public Broadcasting System TV station in Chicago hosting his own live weekly magazine format show. "Our People" was the first show of its kind in the nation - a show of, for and by Black people. He then went on to spend 22½ years with WMAQ-TV, the NBC owned station in Chicago, initially hosting another weekly magazine format show, "Tilmon Tempo" and then serving as on-air weather forecaster and aviation and science reporter. His many accomplishments in television include winning a Chicago Emmy, a nomination for a National Emmy and the Illinois Associated Press and Illinois United Press International awards for excellence in reporting and broadcasting. In April of 2000 Jim was honored by the Chicago Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and presented the Silver Circle Award for his many significant contributions to the television industry for over 25 years. One such contribution was an in-depth look Jim took at the overall security at O'Hare Airport in Chicago. His reports eventually led to noticeable changes and improvement in the airport's security procedures. In 1993 a tribute to Jim honoring his 25 years of service as a Chicago journalist was read into the Congressional Record of the United States by Illinois Congressman Bobby L. Rush.

Jim has also served as an expert witness in the areas of aviation and weather for many legal firms in Chicago.

Music has remained important to Jim and he played first chair clarinet with the Lake Forest Symphony for three years. He has also created and recorded a CD of relaxation music titled Angel Whispers, recently re-released under the title Soft Songs. Jim has created original music for video and audio productions including made for television motion pictures and some of his works are used in conjunction with a one-woman dramatic performance, "Winterkill".

Because of his varied, extensive and interesting background he was and is often called upon to be the keynote speaker for many organizations and functions.

In 1994 Jim retired from American Airlines and resigned his position with NBC. At his resignation from WMAQ-TV the FAA named an airway navigation point after him and Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago issued a "Jim Tilmon Day" proclamation. And although he spent his flying career with American Airlines, United Airlines recognized his contributions to aviation by awarding him the title of "Honorary United Airlines Captain".

After moving to Arizona in the Fall of 1994, Jim continued doing occasional on-air aviation reporting for the FOX television station in Chicago and for the local FOX affiliate in Phoenix. He has since been frequently called on as an expert in aviation matters by the FOX, NBC, CBS, ABC affiliates and Independent stations in Phoenix, WMAQ-TV and WBBM-TV in Chicago, NBC-17 Raleigh, MSNBC, CNBC, CNN International and Headline News. Jim has appeared on NBC Nightly News, Anderson Cooper 360, Chris Matthews "Hard Ball", the Abrams Report, The News with Brian Williams, Nightline with Ted Koppel, First Business and also on numerous radio stations across the country.

In September 2002 Jim returned to Chicago to join WBBM-TV CBS 2 Chicago's 4:00 PM news as a weather forecaster. He also served as the station's aviation reporter and analyst for three years. During this time in Chicago Jim was appointed to the Illinois Veterans Advisory Council by the Secretary of State. In 2004 the DuSable Museum of African American History named him a "Trailblazer" History Maker. Also in 2004, Jim was inducted into the Chicago Senior Citizens Hall of Fame and given the Luminary Senior Award for making "significant and continuing contributions to the social and cultural life in the City of Chicago"

Prior to leaving Chicago in 2005, Jim and his wife Joan formed The Tilmon Group, a consulting company, now operating from Arizona. The company motto reads "Dedicated to moving ourselves and others toward life's greatest rewards" and provides service in a variety of areas.

Maintaining an interest in various aspects of the leisure travel industry, they worked with WorldVentures/Rovia for a short time. Jim is the WorldVentures 2009 recipient of the Kim Eaton Hero Award given to the person who most closely embodies Kim's loving spirit of service, determination and heroism.

Perhaps what may prove to be one of Jim's greatest accomplishments is his being selected as Vice Chairman of Your Success Network, a source of life skills and personal development training available through interactive internet access offering content to broaden the minds of those, particularly youths, who have the desire for change and are willing to take the time to learn. He also serves on the National Advisory Board for Rachel's Challenge whose mission is "...to inspire, equip and empower every person to create a permanent positive culture change in their school, business and community by starting a chain reaction of kindness and compassion."

Jim was selected for a small acting role in the television series "E.R." Most recently he had a cameo appearance in the Paramount motion picture "Flight".

Jim is married with three children and five grandchildren. His first book, Age Is an Attitude – Tips and Tricks for Young People Over 60, was published in December, 2011. Jim is currently completing his autobiography.