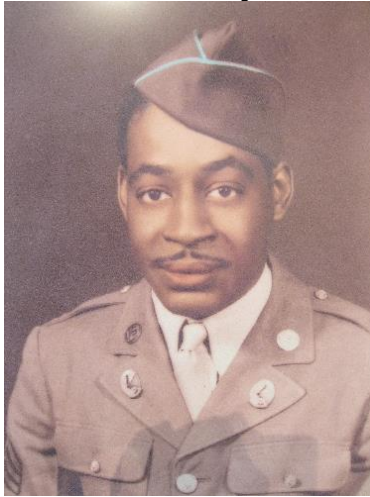


## Don A. Taylor



Don A. Taylor, a life-long resident of Wadsworth, Ohio, was an inventor who earned his first of many patents while just a teen. In 1938, when he was an 18 year old senior at Akron's West High School, he was awarded a U.S. patent for inventing a method to mount and operate rapid firing guns on Army aircraft. The device separated the discharge of the bullets creating multiple "hit points".

Mr. Taylor's highly analytical mind was equally matched by his artistic skills. It was Mr. Taylor's artwork that first caught the attention of some high profile people in the community.

In 1935, his father, the late John T. Taylor, worked at the Seiberling Rubber Company (later acquired by the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company) and asked his boss, C.W. Seiberling to look at some of his son's woodcarvings such as figures of Mark Twain, Will Rogers, and Joe Louis. Seiberling's sponsorship led to exhibitions of Taylor's work. C.W. Seiberling continued to be impressed with the young Mr. Taylor's intelligence, skill on mechanical drawing and humble personality which led him to send Mr. Taylor to Akron University for a year to study mechanical drawing.

In addition to Mr. Taylor's artistic and engineering capabilities, he was an impressive athlete earning letters in high school track at two high schools ( Wadsworth and West High School in Akron) for his outstanding abilities in the 100, 220 and broad jump. Mr. Taylor was the captain of the West High School track team in 1937. Mr. Taylor also played football before a thigh injury sidelined him. Baseball was another love of Mr. Taylor and he was a good enough pitcher to get a try-out with the Newark Eagles.

Mr. Taylor entered the U.S. Army at age 23 during World War II, where he served as a sergeant in Company A, 9<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland. Aberdeen was established in 1917 to test field artillery weapons, ammunition, trench mortars, air defense guns and railway artillery.

In the years that followed, Mr. Taylor's honorable discharge from the Army, he worked for a number of years at the Barefoot Sole Company, rising through the ranks to become a design executive. He later started his own research and development company, Taylor & Associates, and earned 3 patents. A February 6, 1970 article in the Plain Dealer cited Taylor & Associates as the oldest black R & D organization in the nation at that time. Taylor & Associates focused on projects in the plastics, rubber and metal fields with products being marketed in the automotive, household and sports fields. Mr. Taylor ran the company for 24 years, until retiring in 1984.

Mr. Taylor's other inventions included a waste-saving process for the rubber industry, new ways of vulcanizing rubber and a special heat battery. In addition to rubber companies, General Motors and other major manufacturers have used his creations. His last patent focused on specialty treated aluminum siding that acted as a solar energy collector, replacing the need for standard roof-mounted or wall-mounted solar collectors.

During an interview in 1978, Taylor talked about the solitary – and frustrating – nature of being an inventor. “My work is 90 percent discouragement and most people can't take that much discouragement, so I work by myself” he said. “Even when you create something, you must define what it means. And that isn't easy.”

Mr. Taylor's grandchildren and great-grandchildren still live in Northeast Ohio. His grandchildren remember him fondly as a man who was brilliant, extremely hard working, rarely slept and had a great sense of humor. Mr. Taylor was a great story-teller and often shared bits of information about his parents, grandparents, siblings and his youth through his stories. He truly embodied the Renaissance man with God-given talents in a wide range of disciplines. Mr. Taylor was recently listed in the book, *Black Inventors: Crafting Over 200 Years of Success* (2008) by Keith C. Holmes.

Mr. Taylor died in 1999.