

Military Review Remembers Lt. Gen. Julius W. Becton Jr.

Lt. Gen. (ret.) Julius W. Becton Jr., 97, formerly of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, died 28 November 2023 at the Fairfax retirement community in Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Entering service amidst the challenges of a segregated society and military during World War II, he became a groundbreaking military officer. He served as a second lieutenant in 1945 with the all-Black 93rd Infantry Division in the Pacific and in 1946 was transferred to the Army Reserve. Reentering active service in 1948, he served with great distinction over the next thirty-five years, leading troops in combat in Korea and Vietnam, and later serving in key roles during the Cold War. His major assignments included commanding the 1st Cavalry Division, the Army Operations Test and Evaluation Agency, and VII Corps in Germany during the Cold War. His final assignment before retiring from the Army in 1983 was deputy commander of the Army Training and Doctrine Command.

After retirement, he served as director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the U.S. Agency for International Development from 1984 to 1985. In 1985, he was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to be director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency—the first African-American to hold that position.

Subsequently, he served as president of Prairie View A&M University (his alma mater) and the chief executive officer of public schools in Washington, D.C. He also served as a corporate executive and was a distinguished author. ■



Lt. Gen., Julius W. Becton Jr. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army via Wikimedia Commons)