

TIME AS BUFFALO SOLDIER PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR VET

UNION-TRIBUNE, 1 March 2013

By [Lola Sherman \(/staff/lola-sherman/\)](#) 12:01 a.m. **March 1, 2013** Updated 9:33 p.m. Feb. 28, 2013

Ernest H. Collier, a Buffalo Soldier, didn't let age or infirmities slow him down.

"He loved to travel, even if he was sick, and would get on a plane by himself," his daughter, Evaughn, of Richmond, said. "He would not miss anything."

Mr. Collier "was involved in everything," said Carl Wright, president of the local **Buffalo Soldiers 9th and 10th (Horse) Cavalry Association**. Besides the association, "everything" included the **Military Order of the Purple Heart** and his church. He officiated at high school track meets and at the **Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista**.

And, Wright said, he supported local groups for both the **Tuskegee Airmen** and the **Montford Point Marines**, World War II African-American military units.

But, Wright said Mr. Collier was proudest of having been a Buffalo Soldier, like his father and uncle before him and "he would tell me how to run the chapter," insisting on presentations at schools so children would know more about the history of the first peacetime all African-American U.S. Army unit, founded just after the Civil War.

Mr. Collier, 92, died Feb. 17 at the Veterans' Administration Hospital in La Jolla.

He was born April 1, 1922, to William Collier and Felicia De Leon Santos on the military post at Fort Stotsenberg, Angeles City, the Philippines.

Mr. Collier was raised in Fort Huachuga, Ariz., and San Diego. He attended Memorial Junior High School, where he met his future bride, Juanita Brown.

He graduated from San Diego High and Santa Ana College.

During World War II, he served in Italy and in Korea. He was severely injured at Pusan.

Mr. Collier was transferred to Letterman Army Hospital in the San Francisco Presidio and there he received the **Purple Heart from Gen. Mark Clark**. Mr. Collier's leg injury was so severe that he was never able to drive again.

After his Army service, he worked a civil-service job in maintenance at Naval Air Station North Island, said Troy Walker, Mr. Collier's surrogate son.

Still, "everybody referred to him as 'Sarge,'" Wright said.

Mr. Collier also was a member of the San Diego chapter of the **Friends of Allensworth**, which supports a state park in the town of **Allensworth founded by African-Americans in the San Joaquin Valley**.

Walker said Mr. Collier also was a member of the **Disabled American Veterans**, the **1402nd Combat Engineer Battalion**, the **Jockey Club of San Diego** and the **Knights of Peter Claver Catholic fraternal organization**. **He was one of a dozen grand marshals of the 2010 Spirit of the Fourth parade in Rancho Bernardo.**

"He was one of the **first officials under USA Track and Field**," getting his certification in 1981 — and keeping it current up until 2013, said Len Krsak of Ohio, chairman of the National Officials Committee of USA Track and Field. Mr. Collier was certified at the national level, Krsak said.

Mr. Collier is survived by his wife; a son, Michael; daughters Evaughn and Michele Hearn; four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Another son, Eric, died in 2006.

His funeral was held Feb. 27 at St. Rita's Church in San Diego. Burial followed at Greenwood Cemetery.