

## *Dye Recognition:* HERE'S TO BROTHER P. J.

This report was created by the members of the Houston (TX) Alumni Chapter Laurel Wreath Award Committee. It is a thoroughly researched and factual account of the civic and professional achievements of Brother Paul (P.J.) Matthews. Each statement of achievement is supported by a credible reference list. The bibliography includes seventy-nine (79) articles and primary source documents.

Early on and with each achievement discovery, it became exceedingly apparent that Brother Matthews areas of achievement met or exceeded the standards established for eligibility for the Laurel Wreath Award. And, Here's Why:

- **Achievements Represent Exceptional Merit and are National/International in Scope.**

The creation of the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum as the first and only national museum that honors the legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers. It is the repository of the largest privately owned collection of African American military memorabilia in the world.

- Since the doors opened on January 5, 2001, more than 500,000 tourists from around the world have visited the museum.

- Brother Matthews has lectured and curated exhibits across America and internationally. In addition, a 10th U.S. Cavalry flag was taken into space by Astronaut Stephanie Wilson and flown at the International Space Station.

Brother Matthews has collaborated with nationally known artists and institutions to curate one-of-a-kind exhibits. A specific example includes the first ever facial reconstruction of a Buffalo Soldier.

- **Demonstration of Exceptional Leadership: Turning a Vision into Reality**

- Brother Matthews recruited and led a team of corporate executives, family/church members, civic leaders, nonprofit foundation managers, brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., business owners and elected officials including the Mayor of Houston and U.S. Congress representatives to raise more than six million dollars to purchase and transform an abandon armory into a national historic site.
- 

Brother Matthews proposed, established and was the first Director of Sales for the military sales division for Merck and Co., one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world. He grew the division from a few hundred thousand dollars in sales to more than a million dollars in two years.

### **Declarative Statements**

“The modern-day phenomena of the Buffalo Soldiers are anchored by the vision of Captain Matthews and the historical artifacts and documents housed at the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum.” Major Charles Williams, President Greater Houston Chapter of the Ninth & Tenth Horse Cavalry Association

“You cannot write the history of military sales at Merck and Co. without an introductory chapter highlighting the contributions of Brother Matthews.” Larry Coffey, Merck retiree

Based on the brief review stated above and the extensive documentation to follow, the members of the Houston (TX) Alumni Chapter recommend Brother P.J. Matthews for the Laurel Wreath Award.

Polemarch Ron Lockett Houston (TX) Alumni Chapter

*Area of Achievement For...*

CAPTAIN PAUL J. MATTHEWS



A TRUE ACHIEVER



For nearly 20 years, men, women and children from around the world have witnessed first-hand the magnitude of Captain Paul J. Matthews' commitment, concern, integrity and humanity. Matthews, a U.S. Army veteran, historian, author, former pharmaceutical company executive and longtime community leader and volunteer, took a giant leap of faith and founded the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum in Houston on January 5, 2001.

Since that time more than 500,000 local, national and international visitors have walked through the doors of the museum, one of the top five tourist attractions in America's fourth largest city. The museum is the first of its kind in the world with the largest private collection of African-American military memorabilia anywhere in the world.

"Captain Matthews is to be commended for the creation of the first and only national repository to honor the valor and sacrifices of African American soldiers who answered America's military call, always fighting for the right to fight," says Major Charles Williams, president of the Greater Houston Chapter, 9th and 10th Horse Cavalry Association.

The BSNM has become the center of the Buffalo Soldier intellectual universe through one-of-a-kind exhibits, lectures from military experts, and serving as national association headquarters and a valuable source of information on the African American military experience.

The museum is located in the Houston Museum District, one of the top cultural districts in the country with more than 7 million annual visits. In addition to preserving the legacy of brave Buffalo Soldiers and chronicling the African American military experience, the museum fosters understanding and appreciation of Black history and culture.

Matthews has collected military artifacts for 40 years and 50 percent of the museum's collection and exhibits have been donated from his private collection.

Exhibits cover seven wars, along with women in the military, chaplains in the military and astronauts. The museum details the history of men and women who overcame extreme adversity while gallantly serving their country, from Crispus Attucks to Gen. Colin Powell.

**Star attractions include:**

\* The Forgotten Faces of Fort Craig Exhibit, featuring the first-ever three-dimensional facial reconstruction of a Buffalo Soldier. Area students and members of social/civic organizations and churches flocked to the theater-style exhibit to witness history in the making and learn how forensic anthropologists and sculptors examined human remains to determine identities and complete facial reconstructions.

\* A buffalo hide overcoat worn by soldiers stationed in Nebraska and the Dakotas. The coat's dense, coarse fur was ideal insulation against the bitter Great Plains winds. This garment belonged to an original Buffalo Soldier from the 1870s.

\* Space Shuttle chair and 10th U.S. Cavalry flag. The museum positions astronauts as modern-day Buffalo Soldiers and explorers of the faraway, often hostile environment of outer space, just as their 1860s-1870s ancestors did expanding America's outer fringes. The chair was donated by former astronaut and Texas native Dr. Bernard Harris. The 10th Cavalry's distinctive flag was taken into orbit in 2006 by Discovery mission specialist Stephanie Wilson.

\* Letter from Korea. Matthews calls this letter from 1951 "paydirt" because it cuts to the heart of the Buffalo Soldiers' long-running struggle for respect from their comrades in arms (and society at large). Writing to his mother in Brownwood, Texas, a member of the 24th U.S. Infantry reflects on the imminent integration of his regiment. A black man in Korea fighting for the liberation of Koreans in a segregated U.S. Army.

\* Parade drum. John Sessums was the only African American member of the Houston Light Guard, the city's first uniformed militia organized after the Civil War. He served 52 years with the company; whose ranks once included many members of Houston's social elite. Today Sessums' drum rests alongside Light Guard artifacts.

In addition, the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum offers programs and projects that reach out to community members of all ages, and serves as a venue for meetings, forums, receptions and galas.

### *Area of Achievement for...* CAPTAIN PAUL J. MATTHEWS *Continues...*

The museum also gives younger generations a golden opportunity to connect to the past, present and future through exhibits and activities. With Matthews' guidance, more than 25,000 students have taken a pledge of valor and courage. They join the ranks as Spiritual Descendants of the Buffalo Soldiers. High school students are part of a training program to give guided tours. Young adult visitors enjoy the Museum After Dark (MAD) Initiative.

Matthews, a true achiever, has received widespread recognition for his commitment to the community, leadership and membership in numerous charitable organizations, work with inner-city youth, involvement in veterans' affairs, lectures and presentations, participation in Black History Month and Juneteenth activities, and collaborations with corporations, government entities and colleges and universities.

#### A DREAMER, A DOER

Matthews' dream of preserving an important part of American history had humble beginnings. At first, he stored and organized his large personal collection of military memorabilia in his garage. When his collection outgrew his garage, he moved it to a building in Houston's historic Third Ward.

It eventually became apparent that a larger space was needed, so Matthews went to work. He set his sights on the Houston Light Guard Armory, a 23,000-square-foot historic armory that dates back to 1925 and was going to be demolished. Matthews raised more than \$6 million during an economic downturn to purchase the facility, transforming a neglected and abandoned building into a registered Texas Historical Commission landmark.

Though Matthews is the man behind the museum, he stresses that he has not done it alone. Early supporters included the influential Greater Houston Partnership, which assisted with obtaining corporate backing. Family members and friends provided startup capital and funds for the first year's operating budget, and continue to provide administrative support and serve as volunteers. Additionally, members of the 9th & 10th Horse Cavalry Association serve as volunteers and have been instrumental in securing unique and historic items for displays.

Matthews is also grateful to his brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., who have provided administrative and financial support by serving on the board and promoting fundraising projects. Three of the six charter board members are Kappas. The official launch of the \$200,000 Soldier's Plaza Brick Paver Project was a breakfast hosted by brothers. Kappas donated more than \$30,000 to the fundraising effort.

Other fraternity, sorority and community organization members serve as board members and volunteers. The museum's Founders Club is comprised of corporate executives who assist with fundraising.

#### AN OFFICER & A GENTLEMAN

Captain Matthews is well-suited for his role with the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum. Matthews, a native of La Marque, Texas, first became interested in the Buffalo Soldiers as an ROTC student at historic Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU), an HBCU near Houston. He was intrigued by the all-Black military units formed by Congress shortly after the Civil War, which included former slaves and veterans.

Matthews was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army and served at Fort Sam Houston as a training officer for medics. He later served as an executive officer with the 5th Infantry Division known as the Red Diamond Division in a MASH unit in Vietnam, where he received a Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal and Combat Medical Badge. He was promoted to captain during his four years in the Army reserve.

As a civilian, Matthews landed a job with Merck – one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world – and was the first African American pharmaceutical representative in the Southwest. In 1994, he was promoted to director of Military Sales, a new division that he proposed and developed. Under his leadership, the new division grew from a few hundred thousand dollars in sales to over a million dollars in sales.

Keith Collins, a Merck retiree, recalls that during his time with the company, Matthews was a catalyst for change when he integrated the all-white Southwest pharmaceutical representative world. He rose through the ranks from sales representative to district manager to director of Military Sales.

## FROM VISION TO REALITY

# *Area of Achievement for...* CAPTAIN PAUL J. MATTHEWS *Continues...*

He was a role model, mentor, and advocate for numerous African American employees at Merck," Collins says.

Throughout his sales career, Matthews was rated number one in the nation. He often states "I will persist until I succeed" quote from the ancient scroll marked III in the Greatest Salesman in the World by Og Mandino.

Matthews remains concerned about the plight of men and women in the military. He was a charter member and first president of the National Association of Black Veterans Houston Chapter, which has assisted hundreds of veterans in gaining access to programs and agencies to serve their needs.

He is the author of two books, "World War II Heroes," a recount of African American units during World War II and "Buffalo Soldiers National Museum," a collection of memorabilia, artifacts, documents, weapons, and displays housed at the museum.

### **A MOVER & SHAKER**

Through his work with the museum and other institutions, Matthews has had an impact nationally and internationally.

He traveled to Paris, France to lecture about African American soldiers and World War II at the American Library. He traveled to the Caribbean country of Belize to present a lecture and exhibit on the ongoing legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers.

Matthews was joined by the Consul General of France, Alexis Andres, during the unveiling of a World War I Memorial at the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum. He partnered with the Consulate General of Italy in Houston and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston for a screening and discussion on "Inside Buffalo," a documentary about African American soldiers in Italy during World War II.

On the national level, Matthews served as chairman of a 2016 event celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Buffalo Soldiers, as part of the 9th and 10th (Horse) Cavalry Association Annual Reunion. He was responsible for the planning, organization and implementation of the sesquicentennial event. Activities were held at the museum, which was chosen as national headquarters of the association, the umbrella organization of more than 40 Buffalo Soldiers' chapters across the country.

Matthews has worked with such national organizations and institutions as the Smithsonian Institute, Library of Congress, U.S. Bureau of Reclamations, AARP and AAA Travel, as well as with a host of museum curators, historians, anthropologists and engineers.

Matthews and Houston actors have conducted historical presentations and reenactments across the country, from church fellowship halls to school cafeterias to corporate dining rooms.

### **National honors he has received include:**

- 2015 Daughters of the American Revolution Distinguished Citizen Award
- 2010 Cowboys of Color Hall of Fame
- 2008 National Women of Achievement Shining Star Award
- 2008 Freedom Foundation of Valley Forge Washington Honor Medal
- 2006 National Educational Association's Carter G. Woodson Award
- 2005 American Legacy Magazine Museum Preservation Award
- 2003 Congressional Black Caucus Veterans' Braintrust Award

### **A LOCAL LEADER**

On the state and local level, Matthews has made a difference in various ways. He helped to revitalize a neglected neighborhood with the purchase and renovation of the museum. He established the Paul J. Matthews Lecture Series at his alma mater, PVAMU, to celebrate the contributions of African American military personnel and engage students in African American history. The series was initially funded by a \$50,000 endowment from Matthews.

Matthews established the Veteran's Oral History Initiative in collaboration with Texas Southern University, the University of Houston and Library of Congress. He also coordinated a Black History Month program at TSU. He served as primary mentor and instructor for the University of Houston American Humanics certification internship program at the museum.

**CAPTAIN P.J. MATTHEWS**

*Area of Achievement for...*  
CAPTAIN PAUL J. MATTHEWS *Continues...*

As a community organizer, Matthews is a board member of the Convict Leasing and Labor Project. In 2018, the discovery of the remains of African Americans on a suburban Houston construction site made headlines. The remains were believed to be of inmates contracted out by Texas prison officials to perform cheap labor. Matthews' responsibilities include disseminating history of the convict leasing system and its connection to modern incarceration and establishing a permanent museum in Fort Bend County, Texas.

Matthews' interest in history has led to the annual observance of the Camp Logan riots of 1917 and the remembrance of Black soldiers who were executed. Matthews worked with the Regional Office of the Veterans Administration for the acquisition and the placement of headstones on the graves of soldiers buried more than 100 years ago in obscurity.

Houston Community College Professor Angela Holder, the daughter and sister of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. members, provides valuable insight into the persona of Matthews and his dedication to the museum.

"He prays with the Board of Directors before any and all of our meetings, project undertakings, community programs, fund-raiser events, and had his Pastor bless our undertaking of acquiring and renovating our current location," Holder says.

She also applauds Matthews for his dedication to African American military history, including the establishment of an annual "Camp Logan: Houston Mutiny of 1917" exhibit to shine a light on the court martial, conviction and execution by hanging of 19 Buffalo Soldiers.

"His pursuit of justice for these unsung heroes has led to the creation of an award-winning documentary on KHOU-TV (CBS affiliate) and the re-dedication of the Camp Logan historical marker in Memorial Park (Houston). Currently, the Undersecretary of the Army has recommended installing a historical marker at Fort Sam Houston, Texas recognizing this tragic and significant chapter in U.S. Army history," Holder says.

Matthews has worked with such organizations as 100 Black Men of Houston, Positive Black Males Association and Junior Buffalo Soldiers. He partnered with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to sponsor an annual summer camp, and partnered with the Buffalo Soldiers Houston Chapter to sponsor military history workshops and camp-outs. He served as 2013 district chairman, W. L. Davis District Boy Scouts of America.

**State and local honors Matthews has received include:**

- 2019 Billy J. Baines Legendary Eagle Award
- 2015 Prairie View Interscholastic League Meritorious Achievement Award
- 2009 Houston Frontiers Club Martin Luther King Jr. Drum Major Award
- 2008 YMCA Houston Minority Achievers Award
- 2008 Top Ladies of Distinction Achievement Award
- 2005 NAACP Community Service Award
- 2005 Houston Rockets Clutch Champion Award

**A MAN OF VISION, CONVICTION**

Captain Paul J. Matthews has achieved a high level of success on numerous levels. He would be honored to follow in the footsteps of previous Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Laurel Wreath recipients who lived up to, above and beyond the motto of, "Achievement in every field of human endeavor."

In the words of Mayor Sylvester Turner, "Captain Paul J. Matthews has made Houston a better place to live for more than 50 years." He has also made a significant impact beyond the city of Houston, touching countless lives with his vision and conviction.

Matthews turned a garage hobby into an international treasure and permanently preserved an often-ignored part of American history. He has inspired students from inner-city neighborhoods and corporate executives from downtown. He has collaborated with local school teachers, nationally-known scientists and foreign diplomats. He has been recognized from coast to coast for his unparalleled achievements. **He has done what no man has ever done before.**