

Paul Parks

Paul Parks was born May 7, 1923, in Indianapolis, Indiana, to Cleab and Hazel Parks, who had met while living on a Seminole reservation in central Florida. Paul and his two sisters, Dorothy and Jacqueline, were of Seminole, Creek, and African-American lineage.

As a young boy, Paul worked for the local grocer, a Jewish man named Mr. Segal, who later helped pay for Paul's college education. Frederick Parker, Paul's high school teacher and mentor, helped him get accepted to Purdue University where Paul studied civil engineering. Because Paul was African American, he was not allowed to stay in the dormitory, so he rented a room from a family who lived near campus.

In the summer of 1942, Paul was drafted into the U.S. Army and was ordered to report to Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana for basic training. Because he had been studying engineering at Purdue University, Paul received special training as a motor-machinist at Camp Lee in Virginia. A few weeks later, Paul was transferred to Camp Shanks in New York where he was shipped out to Europe in the summer of 1943. He was a member of the 365th Unit of the Quartermaster Corps stationed in [England](#) until the invasion of Normandy.

On June 6, 1944, Paul joined thousands of armed forces crossing the English Channel into Normandy. As a combat engineer, Paul had to go ashore first to clear the hillsides of mines. He continued on to [Paris](#) and



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then crossed the border into [Germany](#); Paul was sent to [Munich](#) to teach engineers how to deactivate plastic mines. In April 1945, Paul was given orders to go to [Dachau](#) concentration camp. Paul knew nothing about German concentration camps and was shocked by what he saw. He and the others with him were angry at the horrific images of death and suffering; Paul recalled that he could not comprehend the atrocities that had taken place.

At Dachau, Paul's task was to bury the dead, and with the help of the U.S. Army Grave Registration, they attempted to identify as many bodies as they could. He helped in the camp for about a week before returning to his unit, which was running a road block outside of [Berlin](#). In the summer of 1945, Paul went back to the [United States](#) for a short time before shipping off to the Philippines in the Pacific theater, where war was still being waged.

A couple of months later, Paul was discharged and returned home. He finished his undergraduate degree at Purdue University and later earned his doctorate from Northeastern University. Paul also became active in the Civil Rights Movement with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Paul married his fiancée, Dorothy Alexander, in 1946, and they had three children: Paul Jr., Pamela, and Stacy. At the time of his interview in 1995, Paul was married to his second wife, Virginia Loftman, and living in Boston, Massachusetts.