

John N. Ford**Date of Death:** 4/18/2017

Major John Thomas Neely Ford, JULY 24, 1924 - APRIL 18, 2017, Chapel Hill.

Retired Major John Thomas Neely Ford, 92, passed away Tuesday, April 18, 2017, after a decade long battle with dementia. By his side, as she has always been for 50 years, was his loving wife Mrs. Lana M. Ford. Major Ford was born July 24, 1924 in Charlotte, North Carolina, the only son of the late Reverends Edward and Nancy Ford. He spent his childhood in Charlotte and attended West Charlotte High School where he excelled in academics and football. He later attended Johnson C Smith University where he pledged the fraternity Omega Psi Phi. Major Ford entered the United States Army in 1943, starting his military career with our nation's first Black Paratrooper Battalion, the 555th at Fort Benning, Georgia. He was deployed as a Second Lieutenant to Germany to lead the 3757 Transportation Corps Truck Company during the post-WWII occupation. In Korea, First Lieutenant Ford was assigned to the Manchu Regiment whose troops were the first element of the Second "Warrior" Division of the Army to set foot on Korean soil. He proved himself a valiant warrior and was awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star with Valor, and the Silver Star throughout the war. After two tours in Korea, he returned to Germany as a Captain with the United States Army Europe where he commanded various logistics battalions. In the early years of the Vietnam War, Major Ford was deployed as Logistical Advisor with the Tactical Area Section for II Corps (Counter Insurgency) for one year. Major Ford was called back stateside to take over as Commanding Officer of various counter insurgency detachments of the 7th Special Forces Group Airborne at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Upon retiring from the Army, Major Ford joined the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and returned to Vietnam as the U.S. Senior Advisor to the Vietnamese Province Chiefs of Lam Dong, Binh Thuan, Ninh Thuan, and Cam Rang Bay Provinces concurrently. After Vietnam, he continued to serve with USAID for another 15 years in the African countries of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Burundi. In all, Major Ford served the United States government for 48 years. Finally, after battling many years of dementia and complications from the disease, he transitioned into his eternal home. He is preceded in death by his parents and two sons John Thomas Ford II and James Leonard Ford. Major Ford has left many to cherish his memory. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Lana Ford; his son John Minh Ford; his daughters Estelle Ford James, E. Nadine Ford (Avis), and Gwendolyn Ford (James); two grandchildren, Adonis and Sharma James; 4 great-grandchildren, and a host of family members and friends.