

I have a hero, and it's pretty easy to see why. Sam Broadnax is in his early eighties and is one of America's national treasures. He's been educated at some of the nation's top universities, had a wonderful and colorful career in broadcast journalism, raised a family, and courageously served his country.

Sam is a Tuskegee Airman, one of America's first black fighter pilots. He and all of the other original Tuskegee Airmen received the Congressional Medal of Honor in 2007 for their contributions to our nation. He also wrote a book called *Blue Skies, Black Wings*, journaling African-Americans and aviation.

I first came to know Sam in the mid-1990s, when I arranged to honor a group of Tuskegee Airmen at my church on the fourth of July. Sam and I have kept in touch since then, and for the past seven years we have e-mailed each other almost daily.

Sam is a constant source of inspiration to me because, despite all odds, he's achieved so much, and also because he is always trying new things. He is passionate about helping young people and educating today's youth about the mission of the Tuskegee Airmen and how it changed the course of American history. He is still very active with the Tuskegee Airman Foundation, helping guide and direct youth based on his experiences. In the summers, he has run a Flight Academy for at-risk youth in the Oakland area.

I am so moved when I think of all that he's achieved in his lifetime and how he refuses to stop growing. In his eighties, he's still striving to share his story, to inspire others with his life experiences, and to never stop learning. On any given day he's working out at the gym, learning to play the guitar, reading, writing, practicing his Spanish, speaking publicly at events for the Tuskegee Airmen, or working on events for the Tuskegee Airmen Organization.

Sam is a true national treasure, but to me he's a treasure because of his tremendous capacity for giving, teaching, and inspiring. His constant encouragement and love make me simply adore him. Ours is an unlikely friendship, but I can only hope that by knowing him I might carry on his legacy of service, patriotism, and commitment to my fellow man. Sam Broadnax is my hero, and I think he is a hero for us all.

Submitter: Dawn Foreman
Subject: Sam Broadnax