

History-Making Black Engineer Challenged

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

Apparently our February 25 account of major technology on the Howard Hughes famed "Spruce Goose" being designed and developed by an African American engineer - Thomas M. (Don) Rutherford, PE, - has produced an attitude of absolute incredulity in some quarters.

We can understand that, having lived in America for quite some time. However, the accomplishments of this 1932 graduate of Portland's Benson Technical High School are so important to our task of establishing suitable role models for our youth (black or white), that we should make immediate effort to validate and document Don's genius for even the most skeptical.

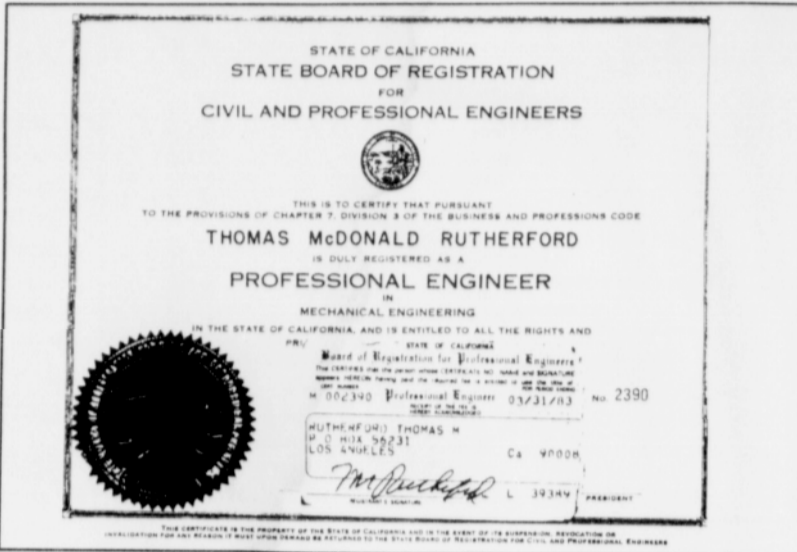
To this pleasurable end, we have assembled here some of the finest testimonials and documentation seen in many a day. Some of the 'doubting Thomases' should hang their heads in shame, that their life-long avocations have not produced such unrestrained praise and approval. And these are just from the Hughes Tool Company, makers of that huge flying boat.

There is a general letter of testimonial from Mr. William T. Mickle, Howard Hughes Chief Aircraft Projects Engineer. And there is the Employment Service Record signed by A.M. Clark, Industrial Relations Director (Last job, Aeronautical Engineer and certified by FAA as Flight Engineer). There are more that we have not room for such as from Daniel Grant, Hydraulic Staff Engineer and co-pilot of the Spruce Goose "...great intelligence, unimpeachable integrity."

Also there is a copy of that famous patent for the mechanism that facilitates the sliding door on automobile vans. And a photocopy of Mr Rutherford's certification as a Professional Engineer, State of California. What is it with these people (some local) who say they worked on the project but "never saw a black man anywhere"? And such has been the fate of so many of our great black inventors throughout our history.



Mrs. Judy Rutherford



"Don" is affiliated with Alpha Phi Alpha, Phi Delta Kappa, and American Society of Mechanical Engineers and is listed in "Black Inventors -

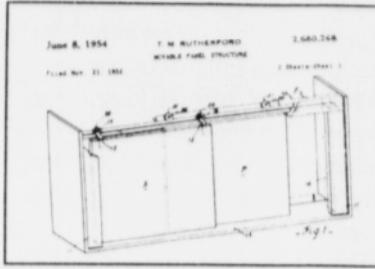
Stories and Sketches", Lorene Richardson and Mary Tyler Jackson (1978).

And beside (not behind) every

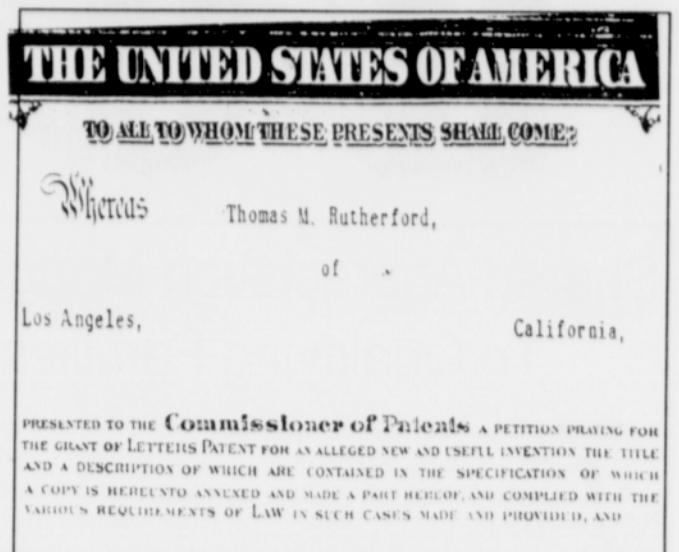
HUGHES TOOL COMPANY
Aircraft Division

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE RECORD OF
Thomas M. Rutherford
This will certify that the above-named person was in the employ of this Company as shown below:

IN	DEPARTMENT	CLASSIFICATION	OUT
4-4-45	Engineering	Engineering Draftsman A	
10-29-45	Engineering	Layout Draftsman A	
5-17-48	Engineering	Engineering Designer B	
6-11-50	Senior Engineering	Engineering Designer B	
3-21-53	Senior Engineering	Mechanical Engineer	
4-13-54	Senior Engineering	Aeronautical Engineer	12-21-57 (Resigned)



remarkable man is a remarkable woman. Picture here is of the late Judy Rutherford whom we cited in our 2/25 article as a dedicated educator. Married for over fifty years, both Rutherford found quality time for youth. Judy was also actively involved with two organizations providing scholarships for young black students, Delta Sigma Theta, and the Links, Inc. a class act, indeed.



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