



Black Horizons

By U.L. "Rip" Gooch

In the immediate wake of the Tuskegee Airmen winning the right for Black to fly combat missions during World War II, African-American pilots were suppose to have entered an era of opportunity – but racism prevented it.

At a time when few Black pilots worked professionally, U.L. "Rip" Gooch used sheer determination to build his own million-dollar airport operation in one of the most conservative states in the nation.

The son of rural Tennessee sharecroppers and the grandson of emancipated slaves, Rip Gooch was orphaned at age four and fended for himself growing up in the 1920s and '30s under the shadow of Jim Crow. Working in fields while watching airplanes fly overhead, he dreamed of escaping to a better life.

Despite earning his wings on the GI Bill after World War II, Rip couldn't find full-time aviation work because he was Black. After battling racism as an inspector with Boeing Airplane Co. in the 1950s, he decided to start his own flight business, which provided a stepping stone for a number of other Black pilots. His work would eventually earn him a place in the Black Aviation Hall of Fame.

As years passed, Rip continued to break racial barriers, by helping establish one of the first minority owned banks in Kansas and becoming one of the few African Americans to serve on the Wichita City Council and the Kansas Senate.

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Black Horizons Pre-Order Form

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