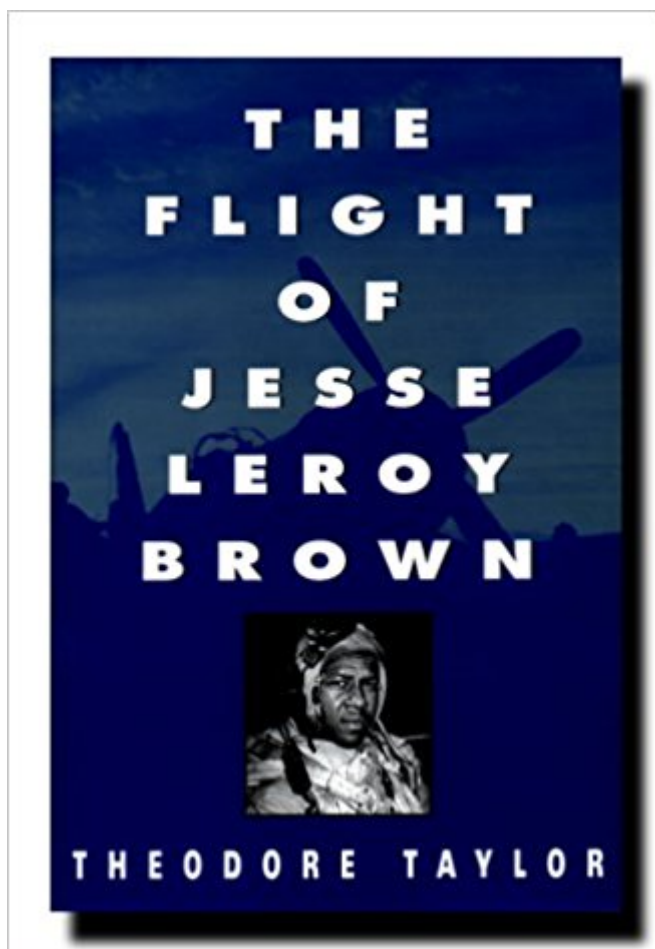


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# The Flight Of Jesse Leroy Brown



## Synopsis

Jesse was raised in a poor but loving family and instilled with values of dignity, education, and perseverance even in the midst of deeply entrenched segregation. A star athlete and an outstanding student, Jesse turned a deaf ear to everyone who told him that he should attend a black college, or that he didn't stand a chance of becoming a Navy pilot. Undeterred, he made his way from the deep South to the campus of Ohio State University. Then, defying the wishes of his family and an unwritten rule of racial exclusion, he qualified for the Navy reserve and was accepted into the Naval Air Training School at Glenview, Illinois--the first black man to enter the program. On March 18, 1947, late morning, like a bird, like a kite, like an impossible dream, Jesse Leroy Brown was flying. While other applicants--many from upper-class backgrounds--were weeded out of the rigorous qualifying process, Jesse forged ahead, often directly in the face of shameful racism and hostile superior officers. When he arrived at the cradle of Naval aviation in Pensacola, Florida, in 1947, he knew the washout rate was high and the odds were stacked against a man openly referred to as "nigger." But Jesse Leroy Brown had lots of practice beating the odds, and now he was on his way to becoming the first black man to fly a Navy fighter and make a carrier landing. He was also on his way to becoming an American hero over the battlefields of Korea. *The Flight of Jesse Leroy Brown* is both a stirring story of a man breaking historic racial barriers and a thrilling tale of Naval carrier aviation. Award-winning author Theodore Taylor, a master of adventure on land and sea, has written a biography that will speak to both those who love the excitement of combat in the air ... and to anyone who has ever dreamed the impossible dream. Jesse Leroy Brown was raised in the segregated South by a hard-working, loving family who instilled values of dignity, education, and perseverance. A star athlete and an outstanding student, he was determined to become a Navy pilot, although such a thing was unheard of for a black man in the 1940s. Undeterred, he entered Ohio State University, rather than a black college, and was able to qualify for the Navy reserve and was accepted into the Naval Air Training School at Glenview, Illinois. Despite racism, and open hostility by many of his superior officers, he finally reached his goal, flying a Navy fighter plane and landing it on a carrier--the first African American ever to do so.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the late 1940s, when every aspiring black pilot had heard of the army's Tuskegee program, Jesse Leroy Brown set his sights on becoming a navy aviator. An outstanding student and top athlete, the 17-year-old's ambition was met with a combination of incredulity and resistance. Yet, at a time when Jim Crow laws were rampant, Brown managed to break the color barrier to become the first black U.S. Navy pilot. Taylor (*The Cay*) puts his considerable narrative skills to good use in tracing Brown's path from his youth in poverty-stricken Palmer's Crossing, Miss., to his eventual induction into the heady and dangerous world of carrier aviation. Taylor based much of his research on interviews with those who knew Brown and on personal letters from more than a half-century ago. He doesn't skimp on the indignities Brown suffered. At flight training in Illinois, the "Negro" stewards who served student pilots took an immediate offense at his presence and treated him rudely, giving him only half portions. Elsewhere, Brown and his wife and their best friends, a white couple, were refused service at both a black and a white restaurant, and wound up eating in their car. Although readers may balk at first at Taylor's supposition of Brown's innermost thoughts—"Just forget my color. Please. Just teach me"—the overall effect is an engaging and intimate glimpse of a young pioneer who desperately wanted to earn his aviator's wings. Brown's death in Korea at age 24 makes his story and his accomplishments all the more poignant. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

YA—More than a biography, this is a thrilling story of naval aviation and combat. In 1926, Brown was born to sharecroppers in the segregated South. An outstanding student and star athlete, he dreamed of becoming a Navy pilot. His parents valued education and hoped that their son would attend a black college, but Brown, single-minded in the pursuit of his dream, entered Ohio State University in September 1944, and went on to become the first black man to fly a Navy fighter and

make a carrier landing. On December 5, 1950, Brown's plane was shot down over Korea and all attempts to rescue him failed. YAs will be touched and inspired by this story of a remarkable man who faced adversity with courage and dignity and persevered to fulfill his dream. Taylor's nonfiction is as absorbing as his fiction. Carol Clark, formerly at Fairfax County Public Schools, VA Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book details (in a good way) the life of a man who encountered racism and bigotry but did not let that get in the way of his hopes, dreams, and patriotism. The three qualities that I just mentioned (as the book notes, and does a good job of noting) led him to become the first African-American Naval Aviator. He wanted to take off and land from aircraft carriers, while Jesse Leroy Brown encountered bigotry (author details that greatly) he never became anti-white (author notes the white people he befriended instructed and took up for Jesse Leroy Brown), he was a devout Christian that never drank alcohol, smoked nor chewed tobacco, and never gambled. The book notes and talks about in great detail that he was kind yet tough and determined individual who when he became a Naval Aviator all of his white squadron mates accepted him as one of their own and were very angry and distraught when he passed away on December 4, 1950 in the Jangjin (Chosin) Reservoir in North Korea. He died protecting US Marines!! He felt like God wanted him to protect those US Marines from the communist forces of North Korea and China. He also loved his wife Daisy Nix Brown and their love (as noted in the book and written very well by the author) could make for a love story. The author really talks about the personal notes he wrote to his wife. A great read and unfortunately we don't know as much about him because of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen but Jesse Leroy Brown was encouraged by the Tuskegee Airmen and they view Jesse Leroy Brown in awe. We owe it to the Tuskegee Airmen to know as much about Jesse Leroy Brown as we can, this book does a good job of helping us do that.

If I had read this before Adam Makos's "Devotion" I might have given this 5 stars. But read it anyways. Ens. Brown was a pioneer and a hero and should be better known among Americans.

Jesse Leroy Brown is a true hero. His life was a shining example of perseverance and courage. Mr. Taylor's book was well written and extremely well researched. Jesse's flight school and combat experiences brought me vivid recollections of my own time in flight school and flying F/A 18s in combat. The Navy, along with American society, has gotten much better; but even in the late 80s and 90s, I observed some of the prejudice that Jesse encountered. This book has universal appeal,

but it will be especially inspirational to those who are on the leading edge of a movement. I wish I could have met Jesse Leroy Brown and thanked him for paving the way for my success some 40 years later. My children will definitely know of his ultimate sacrifice. I thank Mr. Taylor for telling this important story.

The life of Jesse Brown is profoundly inspirational and poignant. A fast read because I couldn't wait for the next chapter. Although long gone, Brown has given me hope that I, too, may realize my dreams, even against all odds.

Every other African American military first has been made into a movie except this one. Jesse Brown's story would be like Top Gun meets Brian's Song. Such a brave and heroic man, awesome story, and my only regret is it took me this long to finally read it.

I already read about Ensign Jesse Brown's untimely death in Korea in an aviation magazine article a few years ago and was greatly touched. Ever since I read the article, I wanted to know more about such a truly noble individual. I was very excited to find this book about his life. Reading Jesse's biography was somewhat bittersweet because I knew how it would end. However, I was able to put myself in the sequential timeframe of the book. It is written in such a way that the author puts the reader in a virtual seat right next to Ensign Brown. I felt his pain, sorrows, and joy. I also sensed the helplessness that he must have felt while trapped in his Corsair, so much so that I shed quite a few tears while reading the last couple of chapters. I hope that someone like Tom Hanks, Steve Spielberg, Spike Lee, Katherine Bigelow, Oprah Winfrey, or Clint Eastwood would read this book, get inspired as I did, and make a movie about Jesse's life. Such a movie is long overdue about not only a hero, but also a truly great man and a role model. And the same goes for Ensign Brown's friend to the end, Captain Thomas Hudner.

I discovered Jesse Leroy Brown, after listening to a broadcast of the Pritzger Military Library series regarding Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. Here is a story of a man that stood against all kinds of adversity, much of which is described here, to pursue a single dream, a single ambition. To fly airplanes in service of his country. While we heap loads of praise on many other folks that may or may not deserve it. This man stands apart from most of them. From humble beginnings in the deep south to the Ohio State University, to training in Pensacola, Florida as an aviator. And then left out of most of Naval history with exception of the naming of a ship. This young man lived much in

his short life. I would recommend this book to everyone. It encompasses Naval and Marine history, African American history, in a year in which we keep looking back to firsts, why not look at some real firsts, and some real struggles. Jesse Leroy Brown, thank you for your service.

Outstanding book on the too-short life of a great American and naval aviator. Highly recommended reading!

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