

## FACTS/UKHS Service Story: Lt. Col. James Belin

Lt. Col. (Retired) James A. Belin  
Union Kempsville High School Class of 1966

Branch of Service: United States Army; Regular Army; Signal Corps  
Years of Service: 1971-1992  
Overseas assignments: Korea, Japan, Gulf War

I spent all my school years in the Princess Anne County/Virginia Beach School System. All my years were in the segregated system where the educators had the daunting task of preparing students to survive in an integrated world. In my humble opinion, they did a tremendous job, given the limited resources and school board support.



*Photo of Lt. Col. (Retired) James A. Belin  
(courtesy of Lt. Col. (Retired) James A. Belin)*

Considering the turbulent times of the 1960's, and all the racial unrest in the country, our teachers did an outstanding job. They sheltered us from the horrors of racism and educated us at the same time. They taught a sense of civic duty, racial pride, and provided an understanding of the responsibility of service to country. In fact, I can remember many of my instructors educating us on the benefits of military service.

One very strong example was one of our history instructors teaching about the history of the Tuskegee Airmen. It was not in our textbooks nor the curriculum, however, he piqued our interest and encouraged additional reading on the service and valor of those brave Airmen. This had much to do with my wanting and desire to serve. I was originally drafted with greetings from local board 100 in Virginia Beach. However, I was in college at Norfolk State University, and a member of the ROTC program, which provided me with a 1D deferment. After completing college, I was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant and 21 years later, I retired as a Lt. Col.

My military assignments ranged from Commander of troops in Korea, to Staff positions in Japan, and the Pentagon, where I was assigned to the Army Staff, my final assignment prior to retirement.

After Military retirement, I spent 6 years working for the City of Virginia Beach as a Housing Programs Supervisor in the Department of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation. My specialty was working with at risk youth in low income areas. The highlight of that career was being the Director of the Youth Intervention Team that received many awards and accolades.

After six years of service with the City, I returned to the Government sector as a Civil Servant. I worked for 20 more years before retiring as a GS14 with a total of 47 years of service. I very frequently have people say to me, "thank you for your service", to which I always reply, "it was my pleasure to serve this great nation". To me it is now and has always been great!

**ABOUT THE CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH'S HISTORY MUSEUMS:**

The City of Virginia Beach History Museums include the Thoroughgood House, the Francis Land House, the Lynnhaven House, and Princess Anne County Training School/Union Kempsville High School Museum. They are part of the City's Cultural Affairs Department. As part of the municipal government of the City of Virginia Beach, the Cultural Affairs Department engages residents and visitors through meaningful arts, heritage, and cultural experiences to connect and strengthen communities. Visit [www.museumsvb.org](http://www.museumsvb.org) for more information, and follow @VBHistoryMuseums on Facebook and Instagram, and @VBHistMuseums on Twitter, to stay up to date on all the events and news from Virginia Beach History Museums.

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