JAMES B. WILLIAMS, M.D.
05/28/19-11/23/16

James B. Williams, M.D. of Las Cruces passed away on November 23, 2016 in Las Cruces.

A private family service is planned for December 10.

James Williams was born in El Paso to Jasper B. and Clara Belle Williams on May 28, 1919. He attended school in El Paso, earned his B.S. from New Mexico A&M, 1947; his M.D. from Creighton University School of Medicine, Omaha, 1951; and his MS in Surgery, from Creighton Medical School, 1956. He married Willeen Brown on May 30, 1951 in Omaha.

He was a general surgeon. He and his brothers, Jasper and Charles, both physicians, established the Williams Clinic and served the Southside of Chicago for 50 years.

He served as chief of surgery at St. Bernard’s Hospital, Chicago and as president of the Creighton University Surgical Society and the Cook County Physicians.

He joined the U.S. Air Corps in 1942 as a 1st Lieutenant. He was one of 101 Tuskegee Airmen officers who protested the whites-only officer’s club facilities at Freeman Field, Indiana. After their initial arrest for refusing to agree to the segregated club, they were released. The protest is viewed by many as an important step toward the desegregation of the armed forces.

Dr. Williams was one of a contingent of African-American physicians who met with President John F. Kennedy to support passage of legislation that withheld federal funds from hospitals that practiced racial segregation and discrimination.

He was the doctor for Dr. Martin Luther King when he was in Chicago.

Dr. Williams attended the March on Washington.

He was one of 350 Tuskegee Airmen who were awarded the Congressional Gold medal in March, 2007.

In 2009, he and fellow Tuskegee Airmen were invited guests to the inauguration of President Barack Obama, the nation’s first African-American president.

Dr. Williams was the recipient of numerous awards and a lifelong member of the N.A.A.C.P.

He was preceded in death by his brother Jasper.

He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Willeen, daughter, Brenda Payton Jones and son-in-law Steven Jones of Oakland CA, son, Dr. James B. Williams II and daughter-in-law Cheryl St. Michel, of Minneapolis MN, grandchildren Michelle, Renee and Michael Williams of Minneapolis, nieces, nephews, grand and great grand nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, please send donations to the Clara Belle Williams scholarship fund at New Mexico State University or the N.A.A.C.P.

Arrangements are with La Paz – Graham’s Funeral Home 555 West Amador Las Cruces NM 88001. To sign the local online guest book visit www.lapaz-grahams.com