

VT-7 flight instructor speaks at military museum

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Ensign Jesse L. Brown was the Navy's first African American pilot and the first to lose his life in combat some 60 years ago.

Decades later, African American pilots like Training Squadron Seven (VT-7) Flight Instructor Lt. Mycel Scott are a common sight in the cockpit.

Scott spoke about his Navy experience at the African American Military History Museum in Hattiesburg on Feb. 12. The audience consisted of representatives from Boy Scouts of America Pine Burr Area Council, a group from Community Cares Health Center and other visitors.

"I used to make paper and model airplanes in my childhood, and by the time I was in fourth grade I knew exactly what I wanted to do – attend the United States Naval Academy and be a pilot," said Scott who suffered from asthma as a child. "In high school, I started researching how I could get into the Naval Academy, and I set goals for myself."

A native of Clarksville, Tenn., Scott studied and worked hard during his training days as a midshipman and received a commission in 2001.

Scott said that while he was at the academy, less than 8 percent of midshipmen were African American. In his class, Scott was one of four African Americans who graduated and the only African American who earned a spot for jet pilot training.

The audience, composed of children, parents, teachers and other visitors, also included two special visitors.

Lura Brown and Wanda Franklin, the brother and niece of Ensign Jesse L. Brown, made a stop at the museum while visiting family in Hattiesburg. The two reside in California.

"I am glad we came and heard (Lt. Scott) speak," Lura Brown

said. "I remember hearing my brother talk about landing on ships."

The African American Military History Museum currently has an extensive exhibit honoring Ensign Jesse L. Brown.

"The displays and presentations are very impressive," Franklin said. "I like how the museum made it interactive for the kids to enjoy and have fun."

Scott said that some of his experiences have similarities to Ensign Brown's.

"Ironically, I was asked to join the same squadron that Ensign Jesse Brown was in which was VF-32... it's now re-designated as VFA-32," Scott said. "VF-32 was where Ensign Brown received his Distinguished Flying Cross. I was astonished upon learning I was in the same squadron as Ensign Brown."

Children in the audience eagerly asked Scott questions. Scott stirred the audience's imagination as he explained what it felt like flying a jet and landing it on an aircraft carrier. He also talked about the other countries he's visited.

"Flying is fun and exciting at the same time," Scott said. "The whole experience is a rush but at the same time you have to remain in control."

Scott said it is very inspirational to have shared his experiences with the audience.

"Growing up I didn't really have role models that helped me to get where I am today," he said. "This is a great opportunity to talk to the children and to be a role model. Ensign Brown paved the way for me and others to be pilots."

Scott gave the audience, especially the children, a few words of wisdom.

"Everything you do in school is very important," Scott said. "Grades are very, very important...it will lay a foundation for what you will do in college and your profession."