

World War II veteran dies hours after Army apology

Samuel Snow fell ill before the ceremony clearing him and 27 other black soldiers of a 1944 conviction.

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SEATTLE — Samuel Snow, an 83-year-old black World War II veteran who had traveled across the country to receive an apology from the Army for being unfairly convicted on rioting charges, died early Sunday just hours after the ceremony honoring him and 27 of his fellow soldiers.

Snow had been admitted to a hospital on the eve of Saturday's ceremony at Ft. Lawton in Seattle. He died hours later — after his son had read to him the certificate that exonerated him and converted his discharge to an honorable status.

“He had talked incessantly about how important this weekend was going to be, and while I'm tremendously sad — more than you know — that this man is no longer with us, I do have the sense that he had a tremendous amount of fulfillment,” said Jack Hamann, who in his book “On American Soil” exposed serious flaws in the 1944 prosecution of 28 black soldiers on rioting charges during a night of violence that left an Italian prisoner of war dead.

The only other surviving veteran associated with the incident could not make the trip from Chicago for the ceremony. Family members, on behalf of the “Ft. Lawton 28,” received certificates and a formal apology from the Army in a tearful but celebratory ceremony that capped three days of commemorative events, some of which Snow had attended.

“My dad has been standing in formation all these years, waiting to have his name cleared. With the Army's honorable discharge, he was at ease. He now has his discharge papers and he went home,” Snow's son, Ray Snow of Leesburg, Fla., said in a statement.



Army spokesman Lt. Col. Luke Knittig said in a statement: “Sam's strength of character and devotion to family and country shined. It was my personal privilege to know him, and his Army family pays tribute to his service and legacy.”

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