Editor's Note: Fresh off a stunning performance opening for Kem at the Ohio Theater and the release of her debut CD 'Sarah's Girl," Stacey Richardson Crawford, after the release of the film "Red Tails," took time to share with CP2 the following story about her dad Tuskegee Airman Roy S. Richardson.

By STACEY RICHARDSON CRAWFORD

It wasn't until around 10 years ago, that I came to find out that there was a completely different story of this man that I knew all of my life. My daddy is a Tuskegee Airmen. In a random conversation about the war, he casually mentioned one day that he was there in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Growing up in the Cleveland suburb of Wickliffe, Ohio, I was taught from the very first day I can remember, that I had the potential of being anything I wanted to be. This was the reality that I lived in. I was encouraged by my parents to dream big and go beyond to reach my goals.

I lived in a two parent home and my father worked extremely hard for everything that we had. When I was born, he was commuting from Harrisburg, PA. to Cleveland, always the tireless provider of our family, while my mother, a housewife for many years, tended to my every need.

When I was a little girl, he wasn't always around because he was always at work. As I got older, we would sometimes visit my father at his job, a construction company in Cleveland, where he mixed asphalt and laid foundations of concrete on city streets, swimming pools, and any place where it was needed. He would often smell like hot tar when he returned home after a long day of work, and I climbed on his lap and cuddled with him no matter what he smelled like. My whole life I knew this man as someone who was one of the hardest working men I had ever seen and admired his dedication, although it was sometimes at the expense of being home with the family.

It wasn't until around 10 years ago, that I came to find out that there was a completely different story of this man that I knew all of my life. My daddy is a Tuskegee Airmen. In a random conversation about the war, he casually mentioned one day that he was there in Tuskegee, Alabama, although not in combat, he was in maintenance and could tell stories of his experience for hours. When I was in college, I minored in Women and Minority Studies, so I cringed when I thought about all the missed opportunities of papers I could have written. When I asked him why he never shared the information, he simply stated that “It was never a big deal.”

The contribution of the Tuskegee Airmen has finally become relevant in the last decade.

The heroic tales and the role models that they are had been deleted from our history. I hadn't heard a lot about their stories until my father finally opened up about it and shared his background, some heartbreaking, and some that would make you want to jump up and cheer.

As a background singer for many R&B artists, and being front and center for many years, I now shared something even greater with my dad. As I was on the road traveling and singing across the world, my dad was now traveling as well, speaking and sharing his knowledge to the masses. We now are both in the spotlight, me with my new career as a solo R&B artist with my first CD "All about Me," and my dad as a national hero. I even had a photo shoot (with his help I may add), and a song dedicated to my parents called "Dreamer", which is also a tribute to him and his involvement, and it is something that I will cherish for many years to come.

With the passing of my mother, who was at his side for 58 years, he has had a lot of time to himself and has used the time to concentrate on spreading the story of the men that sacrificed their lives for this country, even when they were the target of segregation and racism.

The fact that they continued to support and protect the lives of the many American servicemen that shunned them is a testament to their heroism. As he gets older, I have watched my 82 year-old father, still working hard every day become a little slower, but his spirit is still around 25 years old.

I have watched him travel to speak to churches, schools and children about our History with pep in his step and a smile on his face. I have witnessed him carefully taking his books, statues, medals, and paraphernalia out of boxes putting them on display for anyone who is in attendance at his speaking engagements.

I watch him proudly signing his name and taking pictures at air shows for people of all ages, races and religions who attentively listen to his stories. I was excited for him to be invited to the White House to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Bush, and taking pictures on the Capitol's stairs with the other remaining airmen. I was beside myself when he attended the Inauguration of the first African American President, again amongst his fellow Tuskegee Airmen. This week I will be attending the release of Red Tails beaming with joy, knowing what everyone else will finally see, that these men are getting the recognition that they have for so long deserved. I will be honoring the memory of these heroes, and sitting beside “MY” greatest hero of them all, Tuskegee Airman Roy S. Richardson, my daddy!