

O. S. (Ozzie) Williams Biography

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Biography

Ozzie Williams, an aeronautical engineer and designer of small rocket engines, developed an airborne radar device for locating downed aircraft. A graduate of the College of Engineering at New York University, Williams was the first African-American to attain the post of engineer at Republic Aviation. He worked there during World War II, and within four years achieved a promotion to senior aerodynamicist. In 1947, the same year in which he earned his master's degree in aeronautical engineering from New York University, Williams moved to Babcock and Wilcox Company, where he was a design draftsman. Afterward, he spent two years as a technical writer with the U.S. Navy Material Catalog Office.

He moved on after the war to serve as group projects engineer at Greer Hydraulics from 1956 to 1962, during which he invented a radar beacon for air searches of wrecked planes. In 1961, Williams accepted a post as rocket propulsion engineer and manager of rocket systems for Grumman International. In this position, he developed a control rocket for the Apollo space program to guide lunar modules during landings.

Beginning in 1962, Williams also worked with Thiokol Chemical Corporation's Reaction Motors Division. He was vice president at Grumman International starting in 1974, heading trade and industrial relations with emerging African countries. His work concentrated on the application of solar and wind energy to African needs. Williams served for a time as professor of marketing at St. John's University in Queens, New York, where he earned an M.B.A. in the subject in 1981. He retired from all of these positions.