

Alaska Highway Testimony
February 28, 2017

To: Gary and other Legislators
Re: The Passing of Senate Bill 46

My name is Katrina Beverly Gill and I am the daughter of Mr. Reginald Beverly who lives in Ruther Glen, Virginia. My dad is one of over 4,000 black soldiers who built the Alaska Highway in 1942. He is now 102 years old. Throughout my lifetime, he has shared many of his experiences with my sisters and me.

When he went to build the Alaska Highway, he was a rarity because he was a black recruit with a university degree. He said, "I was drafted December 5, 1941, two days before Pearl Harbor. I was a high school math teacher. Once drafted, I only had time to report to school the next morning, call the class roll and bid my students and administration goodbye. From there, I traveled two miles to Bowling Green to catch the bus to go to Fort Meade, Maryland. I was twenty-six years old."

My Dad, Mr. Beverly had received a Bachelor of Science degree from Virginia State University, the first fully state-supported four-year institution of higher learning for blacks in America. He was assigned to the 95th Regiment.

While serving in Alaska as a regimental surveyor building the Alcan Highway, Mr. Beverly had to endure the treacherous weather while living in substandard conditions such as living in tents with ice approximately one inch thick on the inside while white soldiers lived in buildings.

While instructing other army surveyors using sophisticated surveying skills and instruments, he had no stripes while his white trainees wore strips. When an army superior observed this situation, he immediately asked, "Where are this soldiers' stripes?" Seeing that this soldier had no stripes, the army superior demanded that this he be given appropriate strips immediately. Mr. Beverly said stripes were delivered to him early on the very next morning!

I do approve the Senate Bill 46. I fully support the passing of this Bill to recognize the Black Soldiers who worked extremely hard on the Alkan Highway and to have a holiday on October 25th of each year. This day is befitting since this was the day that a Black Soldier and a white soldier shook hand upon completion of such a tremendous project!

Thank you very much and I do hope that Senate Bill 46 is passed.

Katrina Beverly Gill