

Justin Carr Wants World Peace



POSTS

DADDY'S LITTLE GIRL AND THE WIND BENEATH HER WINGS

MAY 1, 2017 | SUSAN TOLER-CARR | 11 COMMENTS

Daddy's Little Girl and the Wind Beneath Her Wings

"You're the end of the rainbow, my pot of gold,

You're daddy's little girl to have and to hold...

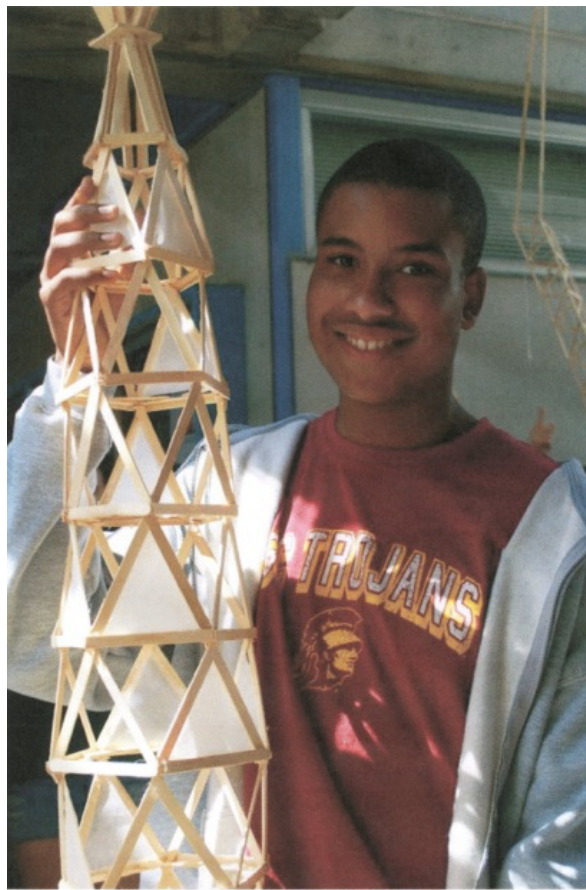
"Daddy's Little Girl" Lyrics by Al Martino

Last week we went to the USC Viterbi School of Engineering Awards Dinner. My friend Stayce Harris was honored. It was on the wings of love and admiration for her that I somehow was able to muster the courage to attend. You see, this event was my re-emergence so to speak; I came out of my cocoon.

It has been over 4 years since I attended anything related to USC even though I am a Trojan for life. My husband Darrell became a Trojan by marriage and oh, my beloved son Justin had dreams of joining the USC student body through his legacy— but really from his own innate talents. As a family, we attended countless USC events through the years. But when life threw us a curveball I had to protect myself from those broken dreams we had for Justin.



Justin, Susan & Darrell Carr at USC Homecoming 2004



My Popsicle Stick Tower made at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Summer Architecture Program 2012

It was a glorious night. This event was wonderful. It was welcoming and safe. A wave of nostalgia swept over me as the USC band played and as I watched my friend LIEUTENANT GENERAL STAYCE D. HARRIS —the first black woman to become an Air Force Lieutenant General, receive the Distinguished Alumni Award. Over 500 people came to “her party” as she said during her acceptance speech.



Stayce D. Harris

Mark A. Stevens Distinguished Alumni Award

Lieutenant General Stayce D. Harris is the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff and Director of the Air Staff for the Headquarters U.S. Air Force. She also serves as Deputy Chairman of the Air Force Council and is the Air Force accreditation official for the international Corps of Air Attachés.

Gen. Harris is a graduate of the USC Viterbi School of Engineering where she received her B.S. degree in Industrial and Systems Engineering and a commission in the Air Force through USC's Detachment 60, AFROTC program. She later received a Masters of Aviation Management from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. She began her AF career as a civil engineer and shortly thereafter attended Undergraduate Pilot training. She flew the C-141 (cargo/transport aircraft) on active duty until joining the Air Force Reserve in 1991 and being hired as a pilot with United Airlines. Her first Pentagon assignments included serving on the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations and then on the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs' staffs. In Jan 2001, she was selected to command the 729th Airlift Squadron (C-141 aircraft) at March Air Reserve Base, CA. In May 2002, she advanced to vice wing commander of the 507th Air Refueling Wing (KC-135 refueling aircraft) at Tinker AFB, OK. She also deployed to Spain serving as the

Stayce and I were classmates in a few general engineering courses on the Monday –Wednesday-Friday track back in the day. We became fast friends. On one particular Thursday, I had to take a second look when I spotted her quickly racing across campus donning a crisp and orderly Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) uniform. I caught up with her and called out her name. She turned around. To my surprise, it was Stayce! I did not know she was in the ROTC. Together in sync, we both busted up laughing and I said: "OMG is this you? She smiled and said proudly, "Yes, it is!" I said: "I'm not mad at you. Right on girl! I am still honored to be your friend. " Fight On!!



You see, on our usual college days, Stayce was dressed like the rest of us, civilian students. We frequently attended social and sporting events on campus. She wore jeans, sweatshirts, bell-bottom pants, leggings, mini skirts, and boots. She even had her fashionable "Farrah Fawcett" hair style too!



Pam , Cynthia and Stayce at USC Homecoming



Stayce was an all-inclusive student. She was involved in all aspects of student life. She also pledged the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. At our campus parties, she often was spotted on the dance floor. Yes, we danced at parties back in the day. She was also quite the dancer— and just as good as the *Soul Train Dancers*. She effortlessly was able to do the various dances i.e. the worm, the point, or the cowboy!! She was always in the mix with the crowd. Stayce was unassuming. She was a mentor and friend to all.



Image by Colourbox

As women in the engineering department, we were rare commodities. A woman in the ROTC was a surprising yet beautiful sight to see. She was committed from an early age. She was “Daddy’s girl”... She said:

“I was born in Los Angeles. My father was career enlisted in the Air Force, so I grew up as a military brat. Basically, I’ve been serving ever since I was born. In my mind, all I wanted to do is grow up to be just like him. When I was 8 years old, I’d watch my dad go to work every day in a light blue shirt and dark blue pants, but I didn’t have a clue about his actual job in the Air Force. All I knew is that every two years, we’d move to another exotic location. And that’s what I enjoyed — the ability to travel the world. It wasn’t until I entered high school and started taking Junior ROTC that I knew I had the propensity to serve and wanted to be an airman.”

Fast forward. We graduated and remained in contact. Following are a few of her humble accomplishments. She has always been passionate about her goals and mission in life. She kept her eyes on the prize.



She did the following without fanfare or accolades:

- B.S. Industrial Engineering USC
- Masters of Aviation Management
- Flew C-141 Cargo planes
- United Airlines Pilot
- Wing Commander
- Major General US Air Force
- Lieutenant General US Air Force
- Friend and Mentor to Many

As she graced the stage during her acceptance speech, she compared her love for her two families – USC and the US Air Force. She paid homage to her #1 role model her father. She also committed and dedicated her excellence in service to the Tuskegee Airmen (the first black servicemen to serve as military aviators in the U.S. armed forces, flying with distinction during World War II.) A group of Tuskegee Airmen also came to celebrate Stayce. They too got a standing ovation. The remaining few are now in their 80's and 90's. It was another honor to be in their presence.



Tuskegee Airmen Image by History.com

“The Tuskegee airmen were the first black servicemen to serve as military aviators in the U.S. armed forces, flying with distinction during World War II. Though subject to racial discrimination both at home and abroad, the 996 pilots and more than 15,000 ground personnel who served with the all-black units would be credited with some 15,500 combat sorties and earn over 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses for their achievements. The highly publicized successes of the Tuskegee Airmen helped pave the way for the eventual integration of the U.S. armed forces under President Harry Truman in 1948. (<http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/tuskegee-airmen>)”



Stayce with two Tuskegee Airmen and USC Classmate Lloyd Mckinney



Tuskegee Airmen April 19, 2017



When Stacey's Dad passed away the Tuskegee Airmen came to her rescue. They adopted her as their daughter. They told her: " It's ok Baby. We are your Daddies now..."

Hearing this gave me chills...

"Daddy's girl, Daddy's girl.

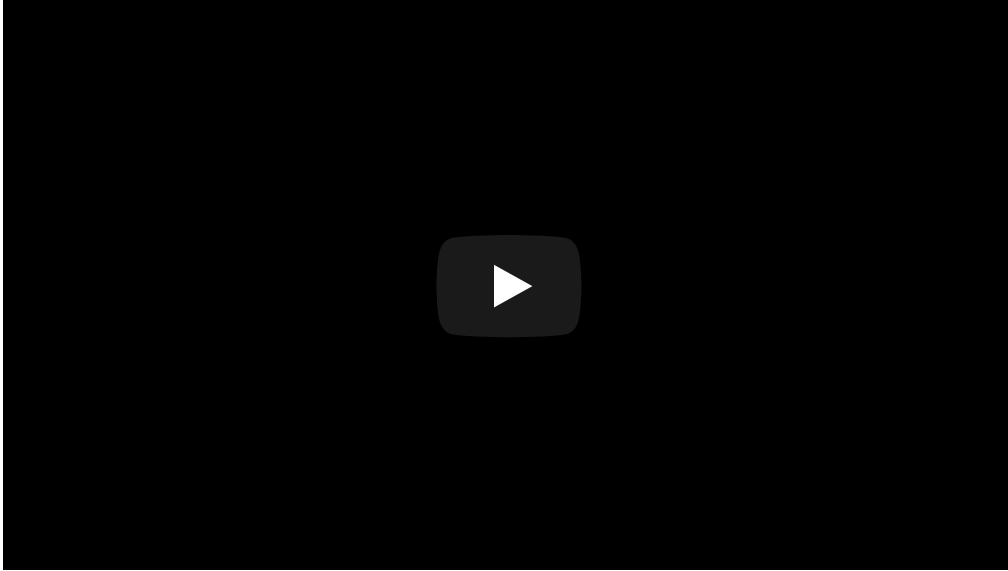
I'm the center, of Daddy's world.

I know I'm Daddy's number one,

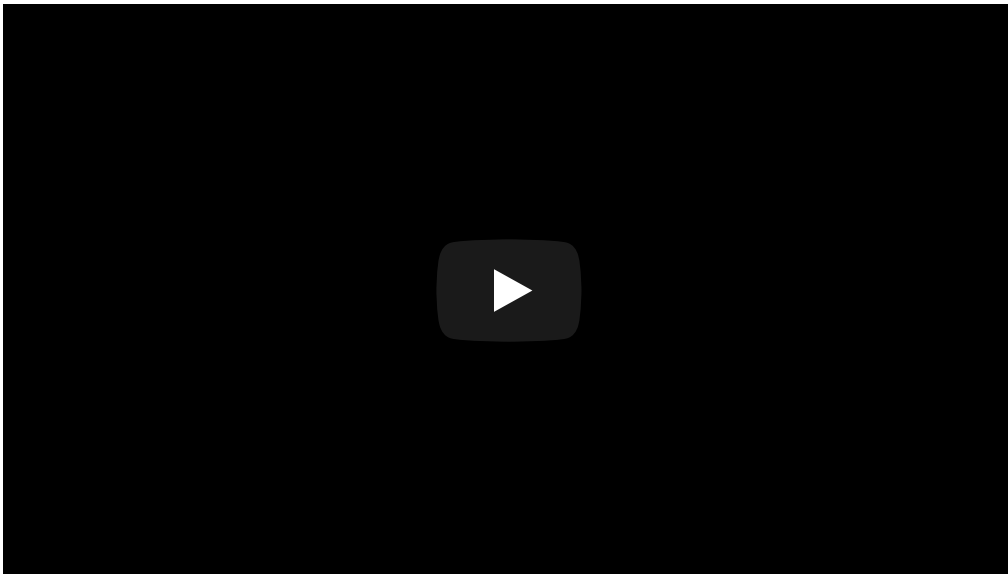
For he loves me like I was his son.

Daddy's girl!"

****So please watch this short 3-minute video of Stacey as we honor all of her goodness. See who has a cameo in it...



Watch Lt. Gen Harris Acceptance Speech at the USC Viterbi 2017 Awards



Trojan's military career took flight from the start

Justin loved Stacey. Every time she would visit she responded to him. She was patient with his endless questions. She also was genuinely interested in the things he liked to do. He took pride in show-

ing her is artwork and his design projects. Whenever we would fly on United Airlines he would ask the stewardess: “ Who is the pilot? Is Ms. Stacey flying the plane? He was so proud of her. It was a blessing that we all got to witness her pinning by the Tuskegee Airmen in 2009.



Gen. Darren W. McDew and Hillard W. Pouncy, original Tuskegee Airman, pin stars on then Maj. Gen. Stayce D. Harris, during a promotion ceremony Aug. 9, 2014 at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Ga. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Jaclyn McDonald)



2009 Las Vegas 2 Star Pinning Ceremony with the Tuskegee Airman



Susan, Stayce & Darrell 2017

“The best piece of advice Harris remembers came from ABC anchor Robin Roberts.

“I always tell people to find your passion and follow your passion with all of your drives and abandon, but most importantly, realize that God’s delays are not his denials. I went to a Black Enterprise women’s summit one year and [Robin Roberts] was the speaker. When she said that, it just resonated with me so well and I have used it in almost every single speech that I’ve given ever since,” Harris said. “I always try to give her credit for it, but it really means that in pursuing your goals, there may be stumbling blocks. I call it turbulence

because I'm a pilot. There's turbulence out there, but those stumbling blocks, in my opinion, really serve as building blocks to get you where you want to go. So don't be deterred if there are delays in you achieving your goal. I think you become stronger for it."

<https://theundefeated.com/features/meet-stayce-harris-the-first-black-woman-to-become-an-air-force-lieutenant-general/>

"Did you ever know that you're my hero,

And everything I would like to be?

I can fly higher than an eagle,

For you are the wind beneath my wings..." Bette Midler

Well, all of this is confirmation of how one can have an extended family. I met most of my cherished friends today at USC. They came to the rescue when we needed them the most 4 years ago. My CIA agents (my best girls) all got their training through our forged friendships developed at USC.



Stayce and her USC gal pals

I have learned how sharing my life stories as I have emerged from this cocoon are the driving forces behind whom I have already started to become during this difficult journey from my chrysalis—a catalyst moving me toward finding my voice, and my wings, once again.

Justin, my butterfly, is now the wind beneath my wings.



Congratulations LIEUTENANT GENERAL STAYCE D. HARRIS You are our “Shero”. You can fly higher than an eagle with your Daddy as your constant wind beneath your wings.



Stayce my USC sister, keep flying high!! I will try too!

Fight On!

P.S. William Wang another USC Alumnus was also honored that night. He was an immigrant student from China. He attended USC as an Electrical Engineering student. He got his first F grade ever in life in his EE 105 class. He did not know how to break the news to his mother. He told her the **F stood for FIGHT ON!!** He said he failed the class 3 times, had a 2.4 GPA and he later launched VIZIO HDTV's.

As he mentioned you can get one at a Costco near you!!!



Justin building a House for Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans 2012

11 THOUGHTS ON “DADDY’S LITTLE GIRL AND THE WIND BENEATH HER WINGS”



Kathleen

MAY 6, 2017 AT 7:38 AM

Beautiful and inspiring in so many ways. Thanks for sharing.



Tina Nader

MAY 5, 2017 AT 7:06 AM

Thanks so much for sending this, Susan!!!

So proud and inspired by both Stayce.... and you!!!!

Such amazing, strong, and beautiful role models!

If I had a daughter, I would want her to grow up like the two of you! Much love & aloha, Tina



Shari Mitchell

MAY 5, 2017 AT 5:28 AM

Thank you Susan for constantly encouraging others to fulfill their passions and dreams.



Renee Klein Plummer

MAY 2, 2017 AT 10:22 PM

What a story Susan . You have a brilliant array of friends- those who are magnets of compassion and kindness draw others to be near them. Thank you for sharing these intimate details of your many friendships. ❤️



Catherynne

MAY 2, 2017 AT 6:40 PM

What a lovely and inspirational woman Ms. Stayce is! Congratulations to her!



Toni Carfino

MAY 2, 2017 AT 12:27 PM

Wow! I don't think that I've had the pleasure of meeting Stayce, but she's amazing and a source of pride for us all! I will definitely use pieces from this article to inspire my girls.

 **Auntie**

MAY 2, 2017 AT 12:02 PM

Dear Susan,

What an amazing and beautiful woman- your friend Stacey! I enjoyed the videos. I like Darrell's pretty butterfly photograph ..By the way I cherish a photograph I have of my friend and me with one of the Tuskegee Airmen.

As always, Susan, thanks for sharing.

Love,

Auntie

 **Noreen**

MAY 2, 2017 AT 10:15 AM

more we can all do in our lives to overcome doubt and setbacks. I love your courage and your friends!!!

 **Noreen**

MAY 2, 2017 AT 10:14 AM

Susan Darling, thanks for sharing yet another beautiful journey of someone dear to you. These stories remind us that there is so m

 **Anonymous**

MAY 2, 2017 AT 10:02 AM

So inspirational! Thank you for sharing Susan

 **rene**

MAY 2, 2017 AT 9:15 AM

What a beautiful story and testament to working hard and following one's dreams. This amazing story is one that all of our children need to hear. Thanks for sharing Susan, you are a part of the greatness of so many narratives. Love you sister-friend.