

IRA CUNNINGHAM
48 YEAR MEMBER CRISPUS ATTUCKS POST 59

IRA CUNNINGHAM IS A MAN WITH A LOT OF CREDENTIALS.

"IKE" AS WE KNOW HIM, SERVED AS COMMANDER OF CRISPUS ATTUCKS POST 59 IN 1960, 1961, AND 1964.

IKE WAS THE FIRST, 5TH DISTRICT COMMANDER, FROM POST 59.

HE WAS ADJUTANT UNDER MONROE WADE WHEN MONROE WAS COMMANDER OF THE POST

HE WAS ALSO ADJUTANT IN THE 5TH DISTRICT, AND KENT COUNTY VET'S COUNCIL.

IKE IS A GOLD CARD LIFE MEMBER HERE AT POST 59.

HE IS A PAST COMMANDER OF THE FRIDAY THE 13TH CLUB OF THE AMERICAN LEGION.

HE HAS SERVED ON SEVERAL COMMITTEE'S IN THE DISTRICT AND HERE IN THE POST.

HE WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN SENDING SEVERAL BOYS TO BOY'S STATE, LOBBYING THE POST TO ALLOCATE FUNDS FOR THIS PURPOSE.

HE HAS SERVED ON THE CLUB BAR COMMITTEE AS WELL.

IKE, LIKE LOUIE, HAS DONE MORE THAN HIS SHARE OF THE WORKLOAD FOR THIS POST.

CONGRATULATIONS TO IKE !!!

Ira Cunningham was the fifth son of George and Glora Stewert Cunningham. He was born March 18, 1979 in Arcadia, Indiana.

He spent his childhood in New London Indiana, Roberts Settlement, Kokomo Indiana and Arcadia Indiana where he graduated from high school. He was accepted Notre Dame but didn't have the necessary funds for college.

Ira Cunningham had four brothers: Richard, William, John and Lewis. Ira had four children: Hassan Abdul-Ali (Kenneth Cunningham), Ahmad Abdul-Ali (Fred Cunningham), Keith Cunningham, and Venetta Cunningham. The two oldest sons Hassan and Ahmad were by his first wife Virginia Lee Cunningham Venetta and Keith by his second wife Ernestine Ross Cunningham who he was married for fifty nine years until his death on September 29, 1995.



Ira Ulyssis Cunningham

Career Highlights and Accomplishments

Ira U. Cunningham was inducted into the United States Navy on January 6, 1944 in Indianapolis, Indiana. He reported for active duty on January 8, 1944 at Bainbridge, Maryland. While at Treasure Island in California, Ira was assigned to the troop transport General Harry Taylor, A.P.145. Ira was a gunner on twenty millimeter guns, and attained the rank of second class petty officer.

Ira U. Cunningham traveled to almost every major port in the Pacific; Pearl Harbor, Guam, Guadacanal, and Siapan, just to name a few.

Ira was in Marseille, France when the first atomic bomb was dropped, and on his way back to the Pacific when the second atomic bomb was dropped. Prior to being discharged he made two more trips to the Middle East. Ira was Honorably discharged on January 18, 1946 from the Grate Lakes Naval Base in Illinois.

Ira joined the American Legion in January 1946 in Kokomo, Indiana, and transferred to Crispus Attucks Post in Grand Rapids, Michigan in March of 1946.

Ira held several appointed and elected offices which included Adjutant and Commander three times, Ira also ran for higher offices. He held all of the offices in the Grand Rapids Council and was elected Commander in 1961. He was Adjutant of the Council for eight years and in 1971 Ira was elected Commander of the Fifth District of the American Legion. Ira was the first Afro American to hold this office in the state of Michigan. Ira has two letters from then Congressman Gerald Ford offering congratulations. In 1972 Ira was appointed Adjutant of the Fifth District. He is presently the secretary of the convention corporation of the Grand Rapids Council and has been active with the conventions for over twenty years.

In 1950, Ira joined General Motors Diesel Equipment Division where he became involed with the U.A.W. Labor Union and was appointed Chairman of the Community Services Committee, Education Ccmmitee, S.U.B. Community, and the Fair Practice Committee. He was elected committeeman and served on the Bargaining Committee for thirteen years. General Motors presented Ira with an Award of Excellence for his community service activities. Ira retired from General Motors with thirty-one years of service.

Ira served on the Board of Directors for the Grand Valley Co-Op Optical for seven years and was Secretary for three years. In 1980 the City Commission appointed Ira to the Homestead Commission for the City of Grand Rapids.

Ira has forty-eight years at Crispus Attucks American Legion, and holds Life Membership status.

He is a member of the Kent County Veterans Honor Guard which conducts military burial functions for Veterans.

Ira has been a member of Veterans of Foreign Wars for five years. He is a member of North Star #5 Prince Hall Masons, and a member of the Club Cruisers where he served two terms as President.