

# Yvonne Clark

By Professor Sterling Haynes

Yvonne Clark was a pioneer for African American women engineers. Born 1929 in Houston, Texas and raised in Louisville, Kentucky. She was passionate about fixing and tinkering with electronics. Growing up during World War II fostered a strong sense of patriotism and desire for fighter planes.

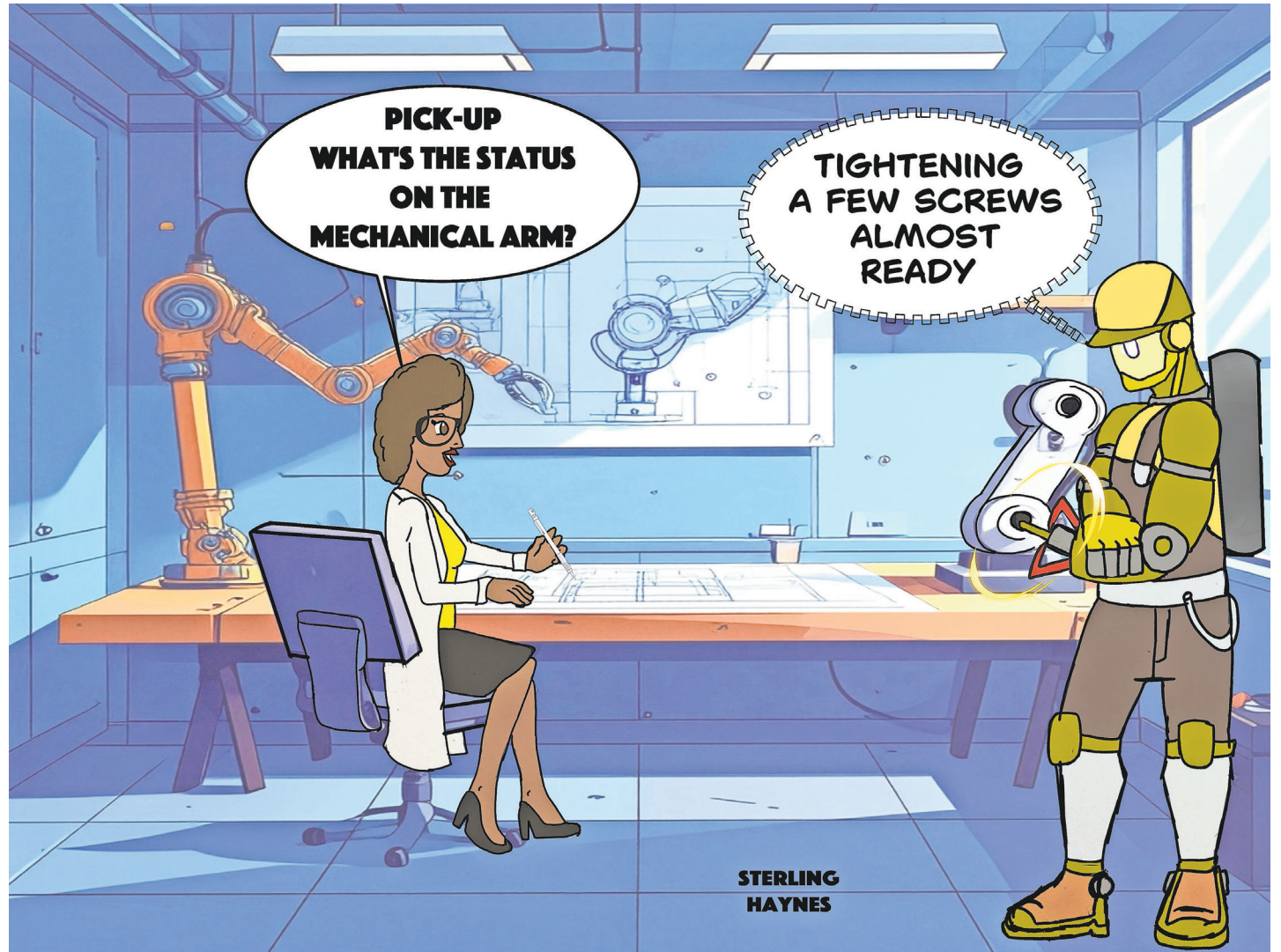
In high school she was prohibited from taking a mechanical drawing class due to her gender. Instead, she took an aeronautics course and joined the Civil Air Patrol becoming the squad leader.

Clark graduated from high school in 1945 at 16 and spent the next two years studying in Boston before entering Howard University in Washington, D.C. Most of her classmates were veterans who had served in World War II.

During college Clark excelled in her studies and graduated with honors. Becoming the first African American woman to earn a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering at Howard University. Due to political issues, she was not allowed to march in her 1951 engineering graduating class of 300 and instead received her diploma in the office of the university president.

After graduation her first job was at a U.S Army ammunition plant called the Frankford Arsenal Gauge Lab in Philadelphia. Conducting research on recoilless weapons. Next, she worked at Radio Corporation of America in Montclair, New Jersey where she designed electrical equipment. Clark continued her education to earn a master's degree in engineering management from Vanderbilt university.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) hired Clark to



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work on several projects across the United States. Investigating Saturn V booster engines for hot spots. Consulting on containers to return moon samples to Earth. As well as space defense. Following her 1955 marriage to William F. "Bill" Clark, Jr., Clark moved to Nashville and was hired as an engineering professor at Tennessee State University.

Affectionately called "TSU's First Lady of Engineering," Clark taught mechanical engineering for 55 years in the College of Engineering and Technology, where she also served twice as chair of the

mechanical engineering department.

In the 1990s, her research focused on refrigerants. She was the main investigator for the research project "Experimental Evaluation of the Performance of Alternative Refrigerants in Heat Pump Cycles" funded by the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

She made great efforts to encourage women to become engineers. Clark eventually retired. In her lifetime, she was awarded the Adult Black Archivers Award, Women of Technology Award for Educational

Leadership, Delta Sigma Theta Educator of the year, President's Distinguished University Award and Distinguished Service Award and several other achievements. Involved in professional engineering societies and organizations.

Clark passed away January 27, 2019, at the age of 89. She is survived by her brother, son and daughter, and their families.

Cartoon Character Dreama and Pick-Up are created by Sterling Haynes. To learn more about my cartoon characters visit [sterlinghaynes.com](http://sterlinghaynes.com). ★

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