

= Julius Franks =

Julius Franks , Jr . (September 5 , 1922 ? November 26 , 2008) was a civil rights leader and an All @-@ American guard who played football at the University of Michigan from 1941 to 1942 . Franks wore # 62 as a varsity letterman in 1941 and # 63 in 1942 . Franks was the first (or second depending on the source) African @-@ American University of Michigan player to become an All @-@ American in football . Illness cut short his collegiate athletic career .

After Michigan , Franks pursued a career in dentistry . He also became an active community leader who contributed his time to public service and who helped to integrate Grand Rapids , Michigan by financing home construction in a majority Caucasian neighborhood .

= = First African @-@ American All @-@ American football player at Michigan = =

Franks , who was born in Macon , Georgia and raised in Hamtramck , Michigan , was named to the Detroit , Michigan , all @-@ city team after the 1939 high school football season . He is the son of Julius Franks , Sr. and Nellie Mae Solomon and father of Daryl , Cheryl , Bobby , Beverly A Grant , Fredrick . After graduating from high school , he attended the University of Michigan , where he became the third African @-@ American to play for the Michigan Wolverines football team . In 1942 , he became the first African @-@ American at Michigan to earn All @-@ American honors . He is described as the second to be All @-@ American by some accounts . Head coach Fritz Crisler said Franks was one of the hardest @-@ working players he ever coached . The 1942 Wolverines ' offensive line , which included Franks , Al Wistert , Robert Kolesar , Merv Pregulman , and Elmer Madar , was known as the " Seven Oak Posts " . Franks credited the group 's success to scrimmaging as rookies against the 1940 offense that included Tom Harmon , Forest Evashevski , and Bob Westfall . Franks was played all 60 minute in his games as a junior in 1942 and was named a first @-@ team All American by the International News Service (Hearst newspapers) , Central Press , and Collier 's Weekly , and a second @-@ team All @-@ American by the Associated Press and New York Sun .

In 1943 , Franks and teammate Tom Kuzma came down with tuberculosis and were hospitalized at University Hospital for 25 months as they recuperated . Franks recalled that head coach Fritz Crisler was a regular visitor to his hospital room , and team star Tom Harmon also stopped to visit while on leave from military service . As a result of the hospitalization , Franks missed his senior year as a football player . He obtained his bachelor of science degree in 1947 .

In 1982 , Franks was named to the University of Michigan Hall of Honor in the fifth class of inductees that was inducted in 1983 . He was the twelfth Michigan football player to earn this honor .

= = Professional career and community service = =

In 1951 , Franks earned his D.D.S. from the University of Michigan Dental School , and practiced dentistry in Grand Rapids , Michigan for more than 40 years . Franks was a leader in the Urban League , United Way , American Red Cross , Boy Scouts of America , and Rotary Club . In 1964 , Michigan Governor George Romney appointed Franks to Western Michigan University 's first Board of Trustees , where he served as a trustee until 1983 . Franks served on several boards : Executive Communication , Vice President , President , 1951 ? 87 ; Kent County Dental Society , 1951 ? 92 ; Michigan & American Dental Association , 1951 ? 96 ; trustee , Western Michigan University , 1964 ? 82 (trustee emeritus , 1983) ; Director , Boulevard Memorial Medical Center , 1974 ? 84 ; Director , United Way Kent County , 1987 ? 92 . In 1992 , Franks contracted Guillain @-@ Barré syndrome , which forced him into retirement .

In the 1960s , Franks helped to integrate Grand Rapids . In the early 1960s , African Americans were not welcome in Grand Rapids ' " white " middle @-@ class neighborhoods , and real estate agents would not show them houses . In 1962 , Franks ' friend , J.E. Adams , found vacant land designated as a potential park site . Adams , Franks , and friends Joseph Lee and Samuel Triplett

created a plan to purchase the 20 acres (80 @, @ 937 m2) site and build a middle @-@ class neighborhood for African @-@ Americans . The announcement " caused an uproar that resulted in protests , lawsuits and threats . " When banks refused to finance the project , the four men purchased the land on their own for \$ 60 @, @ 000 and started building . The first of 51 houses was completed in 1965 . Today , the neighborhood , known as Auburn Hills (not to be confused with Auburn Hills , Michigan) , has a population of 542 and the lowest crime rate in Grand Rapids . In 2006 , the Michigan Alumni Club gave Franks the " Paul G. Goebel , Sr. Distinguished Alumni in Athletics Award " . In later years , Franks was also a leader with the Urban League , United Way and other groups .