

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Pinkney, Bill (William)
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 8, 2003 and August 9, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:49:12).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Cultural heritage educator Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney (1935 - ) became the first African American to solo-circumnavigate the globe by going around South America. Pinkney was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 8, 2003 and August 9, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_178
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The first African American to solo-circumnavigate the world via Cape Horn, William Pinkney was born on September 15, 1935, in Chicago. Attending public schools in Chicago, Pinkney joined the U.S. Navy after graduating from high school in 1954.

After having served for eight years in the Navy, Pinkney became involved in the cosmetics industry, first as a freelance make-up artist, then, in 1973, as a marketing manager for Revlon. In 1977, Pinkney became the director of marketing at John Prod, another cosmetics company. Going to work for the city of Chicago in 1980, Pinkney took a post as a public information officer with the Department of Human Services, from which he retired in 1983.

Throughout the course of his career, Pinkney's real passion remained sailing. Having sailed the Great Lakes and oceans for more than thirty years, Pinkney decided to embark on a solo trip around the globe in 1990. Pinkney's route took him around the dangerous tip of South America, considered to be some of the most treacherous waters in the world; upon successfully realizing his dream, he was honored as the Chicago Yacht Club's Yachtsman of the Year in 1992, and *Chicago Magazine* named him Chicagooan of the Year in 1999.

Combining his passion for sailing with his interest in history, particularly naval voyages of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, Pinkney's next adventure was aboard the Freedom Schooner Amistad. In January 1999, Pinkney and his crew set out to retrace the Middle Passage slave trade routes; the purpose of the project was to educate people about the original Amistad, as well as about the slave trade and human rights. Pinkney teamed up with PBS and several corporations to create a television special, and to bring teachers from across the country on board en route so that they could experience the trip firsthand.

Pinkney also wrote a first-grade textbook, *Captain Bill Pinkney's Journey*, which appeared in more than 5,000 schools across the country. Pinkney was honored by senators, former President George Bush, and foreign dignitaries for his dedication to education and his numerous other accomplishments. Pinkney was a trustee of

Mystic Seaport, a museum devoted to the history of America's interactions with the sea; and as a director of the American Sail Training Association.

Pinkney and his wife, Migdalia, were longtime residents of Connecticut.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on August 8, 2003 and August 9, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Cultural heritage educator Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney (1935 - ) became the first African American to solo-circumnavigate the globe by going around South America.

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## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

### Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

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## Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Pinkney, Bill (William)

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

McCauley, Brewster (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Pinkney, Bill (William)--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Cultural Heritage Educator

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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## Administrative Information

### Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

### Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney, August 8, 2003 and August 9, 2003. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney, Section A2003\_178\_001\_001,  
TRT: 0:31:15 ?

The first black man to solo circumnavigate the globe, William D. Pinkney, details his family background and life in pre WWII Chicago. He discusses the racial divisions and lines of racial demarcation in the city as well as his hardscrabble life. His father, institutionalized when William was in 6th grade, had a permanent effect on his psyche. Pinkney also details his elementary school years at several locations and how a racist remark by one teacher had a profound effect upon him.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney, Section A2003\_178\_001\_002,  
TRT: 0:31:14 ?

Merchant Marine Captain, William D. Pinkney discusses his life as a teen in the Navy and his interest in the drum and bugle corps. Pinkney reveals the covert racism he faced in his efforts to gain a Naval commission.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney, Section A2003\_178\_001\_003,  
TRT: 0:30:01 ?

Noted makeup stylist, William D. Pinkney discusses his career in the makeup business, outlining his activities in unions, and his employment at Revlon. Pinkney explains why he resigned from Revlon and goes on to explain his early interest in sailing.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney, Section A2003\_178\_001\_004,  
TRT: 0:31:16 ?

The first black man to solo circumnavigate the globe by boat, William D. Pinkney details his reentry into sailing. Pinkney explains his plan for his circumnavigation, detailing many of the funding problems he encountered along the way. He also shares how his sailing experiences have helped him learn about himself and the world.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney, Section A2003\_178\_001\_005,  
TRT: 0:15:26 ?

Famed sailing expeditioner, William D. Pinkney, describes his successful return to Boston after 22 months circumnavigating the globe via the five Southern Capes. The first segment is a moving philosophical examination of man's relationship to self and the universe. Pinkney details his surprise upon returning to the States and finding such an intense level of interest in his adventure as the first black man to circumnavigate the globe.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney, Section A2003\_178\_002\_006,  
TRT: 0:30:00 ?

William Pinkney details his 22-month circumnavigation of the globe. He discusses his daily life on the ship, how he tended his emotional and physical needs and most importantly the ship. As the first black man to sail solo around all the Southern Capes, Pinkney views his travel as the ultimate test of his physical and mental capabilities.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney, Section A2003\_178\_002\_007,  
TRT: 0:30:00 ?

William Pinkney describes life on his boat and the swirl of emotions and observations while circumnavigating the globe. He then discusses his plans to undertake a voyage recreating the routes of the Middle Passage.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. William "Bill" Pinkney, Section A2003\_178\_002\_008,  
TRT: 0:30:00 ?

William Pinkney discusses his Middle Passage voyage on the replica Amistad in

1999.