

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr.

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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>	Anderson, Joseph B., Jr., 1943-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 6, 2005 and June 11, 2010
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005 and 2010
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:50:31).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Corporate executive and military officer Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr. (1943 - ) is a decorated Vietnam veteran, who served as the general director of the Pontiac Motors Division of General Motors, and is the current chairman and chief executive officer of TAG Holdings. Anderson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 6, 2005 and June 11, 2010, in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan and Troy, Michigan. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_099
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Corporate executive and military officer Joseph Benjamin Anderson was born on February 12, 1943, in Topeka, Kansas, to Pearl Gatewood and Joseph B. Anderson, Sr. His father was a widower with one son while his mother had two daughters from a previous marriage. An Eagle Scout and athlete, Anderson attended Washington Elementary School and East Topeka Junior High School before graduating with honors from Topeka High School in 1961. He entered the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, New York. While a cadet, Anderson spent two months in Uganda in 1964 with Operation Crossroads Africa. One of only four African Americans to graduate from West Point in 1965, he earned his B.S. degree in math and engineering and his commission as a second lieutenant. In 1972 and 1973, Anderson received master's degrees in political science and in African area studies from the University of California, Los Angeles and attended the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1977. He graduated from the Advanced Management Program at Harvard University Business School in 1984.

An officer in the 82nd Airborne Division, Anderson served two tours of duty with the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam earning two Silver Stars, five Bronze Stars, three Army Commendation Medals and eleven Air Medals. As an infantry platoon leader, he was featured in Pierre Schoendoerffer's 1966 Oscar winning documentary, *The Anderson Platoon*. He served as aide-de-camp to two generals and taught as an assistant social sciences professor at West Point. He reached the rank of major before resigning his commission in 1978.

Selected as a White House Fellow in 1977, Anderson served as a special assistant to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Juanita Kreps. In 1979, he joined the Pontiac Motors Division of General Motors Corporation and, in 1990, he served as the general director of the company's body hardware business unit. From 1992 to 1993, Anderson was the president and chief executive officer of auto parts manufacturer, Composite Energy Management Systems. He later served as the chairman and chief executive officer of Chivas Industries until 2002.

He then joined TAG Holdings as chairman and chief executive officer. A board member of Quaker Chemical Corporation and ArvinMeritor, Anderson is also chairman of the Original Equipment Suppliers Association and director of the Society of Automobile Engineers Foundation. He also sits on the board of many non-profit organizations, including the Beaumont Foundation, Kettering University, Horizons-Upward Bound, Focus: Hope and the National Recreation Foundation.

Joseph Anderson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 6, 2005 and on June 11, 2010.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 6, 2005 and June 11, 2010, in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan and Troy, Michigan, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Corporate executive and military officer Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr. (1943 - ) is a decorated Vietnam veteran, who served as the general director of the Pontiac Motors Division of General Motors, and is the current chairman and chief executive officer of TAG Holdings.

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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:

Anderson, Joseph B., Jr., 1943-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Anderson, Joseph B., Jr., 1943---Interviews

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United States--Armed Forces--African American Officers--Interviews.

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African American chief executive officers--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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United States. Army. Airborne Division, 82nd

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General Motors Corporation

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## Occupations:

Military Officer

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Corporate Executive

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers|MilitaryMakers

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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 Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr., April 6, 2005 and June 11, 2010. 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).

## 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 Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr., Section A2005\_099\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr. was born on February 12, 1943 in Topeka, Kansas to Pearl Gatewood Anderson and Joseph Anderson, Sr. His mother was born in McCloud, Oklahoma in 1909, and her father was a minister for the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Anderson's paternal grandfather was a Baptist minister who founded the first black church in Santa Ana, California. His father was born in Nacogdoches, Texas in 1906 and moved to Topeka to work in a trade school. With three much older siblings, Anderson grew up like an only child in the Mudtown area of Topeka. Besides working on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad, his father took photographs for a living, and his mother developed them in the darkroom in their basement. Anderson played baseball and the saxophone as a child, and his parents stressed the importance of school and church. Anderson attended Washington Elementary School during the ruling on Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, 1954 and was in the same grade as the daughter of the plaintiff.

African American families--Kansas--Topeka.

African American parents--Kansas--Topeka.

Segregation in education--Kansas--Topeka.

Stepfamilies--Kansas--Topeka.

African Americans--Social life and customs--Kansas--Topeka.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr., Section A2005\_099\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr. played the saxophone and was mentored by the principal, Mr. Oiler, at East Topeka Junior High School. In high school, he participated in the local NAACP youth chapter and the American Legion Boys' State, a program for teaching youth civic responsibility. When Anderson was selected to represent Kansas at Boys' Nation, the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York recruited him. After graduating with honors from Topeka High School in 1961, he enrolled in the United States Military Academy, where he was one of only four African American students in his class. The environment was isolating, but not hostile, and Anderson socialized with black workers, college students in Washington, D.C. and in New York City, and the nearby community of Highland Falls. As the lead soloist for the chapel choir and the West Point Glee Club, he performed on 'The Ed Sullivan Show' and at Carnegie Hall. During his senior year, Anderson traveled to Uganda with Operation Crossroads Africa.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Kansas--Topeka.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

African American military cadets--New York (State)--West Point.

United States Military Academy.

Boys--Societies and clubs--Kansas--Topeka.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr., Section A2005\_099\_001\_003,  
TRT: 0:28:00 ?

Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr. traveled to Uganda in 1964. In 1965, he was deployed to the Vietnam War, before protesting it was widespread. French filmmaker Pierre Schoendoerffer followed him as the subject for 'Le Section Anderson,' a documentary on the Vietnam War. As the only black officer in his battalion, he set an example by earning numerous medals. Between tours, he became the first black aide-de-camp in the U.S. Army while working at Fort Dix, and was at the swearing in of General Frederic Ellis Davison when Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was shot. Anderson noted the drop in morale during his second tour in Vietnam. In 1971, he entered graduate school at the University of California Los Angeles, and taught political science at West Point from 1973 to 1976. He then taught at the United States Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas until 1977, when he was accepted to the prestigious White House Fellows program, which boasts alumnus HistoryMaker General Colin L. Powell.

United States Military Academy.

Armed Forces--African American officers.

United States. Army. 82nd Airborne Division.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975--African Americans.

United States--Armed Forces--Recruiting, enlistment, etc.

African Americans--Study and teaching (Higher).

President's Commission on White House Fellows (U.S.).

Civil Service--Study and teaching (Internship)--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr., Section A2005\_099\_002\_004,  
TRT: 0:30:35 ?

Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr.'s time in military settings between his tours in Vietnam helped him adjust to life in the United States after the war. In hopes of teaching at his alma mater, the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, he earned dual master's degrees in African area studies and comparative government at the University of California Los Angeles. Although the campus was very politically active during this time, he was never targeted for his military background. After graduating in 1973, he taught at West Point for three years and left just before the academy admitted its first female students. Anderson then taught the U.S. Army at its Command and General Staff College in Leavenworth, Kansas. In 1977, he was accepted to the White House Fellows program, where he worked under U.S. Secretary of Commerce Juanita M. Kreps. In 1979, Anderson accepted a job with General Motors Company as the director of quality control in the Pontiac Motors division.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975.

Armed Forces--African American officers.

African Americans--Study and teaching (Higher).

President's Commission on White House Fellows (U.S.).

Civil Service--Study and teaching (Internship)--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr., Section A2005\_099\_002\_005,  
TRT: 0:34:20 ?

Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr. joined General Motors Corporation in 1979 as the director of quality control at the Pontiac Division in Detroit, Michigan. He was mentored by Jim Fitzpatrick and Bob Stempel and promoted to Pontiac Motors plant manager in 1981. Despite being one of the first African American plant managers at GM, he did not experience racism on the job. In 1984, GM sent him to Harvard Business School's Advanced Management Program in Boston, Massachusetts, and named him head of inspection for the Chevrolet-Pontiac-Canada-Group later that year. With restructuring at GM in the late 1980s leading to a reduction in his responsibilities, he left to serve as CEO and president of Composite Energy Management Systems in 1992. Upon realizing the limitations of his new position, Anderson bought his own company, Chivas Products, and operated it from 1994 to 2002. Anderson describes the development of the automobile industry from the 1960s through the 1980s and stresses the importance of strong management.

Automobile industry and trade.

African American chief executive officers.

General Motors Corporation.

African American business enterprises.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr., Section A2005\_099\_002\_006, TRT: 0:18:26 ?

Joseph Benjamin Anderson, Jr., at the time of the interview, owned four companies that assemble components for the Honda Motor Company, and planned on selling them to his employees when he retired. In reflecting upon his legacy as a black business owner, Anderson explains why he aims to keep his enterprises minority-owned. Anderson shares his thoughts on the American automobile industry's recovery from its earlier decline, how it has remained competitive globally and the unique opportunities afforded to his generation of African American leaders. Although his parents passed away before his success in General Motors Company, Anderson shared his life with his large extended family. He volunteered his time with programs like Horizon-Upward Bound and the National Recreation Foundation. Anderson describes his hopes for the African American community and concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.

African American chief executive officers.

African American business enterprises.

Automobile industry and trade.

Automobile supplies industry.

Nonprofit organizations--Management.