

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Arthur Holmes

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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>	Holmes, Arthur
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Holmes,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 29, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:23:25).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Major general Arthur Holmes (1931 - ) retired from the military as Commanding General, U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Command, where he oversaw the delivery of 30,000 tactical vehicles to the field with the highest level of user satisfaction yet achieved. He also served as Director of Go Montgomery!, a Department of Public Works and Transportation in Alabama. Holmes was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 29, 2008, in Olney, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_100
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

A long time military officer, Major General Arthur Holmes, Jr. served almost four decades in the United States Army, retiring as a Commanding General. A highly distinguished officer, he won several awards and decorations such as the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal and the Distinguished Service Medal.

Holmes began his military career as a member of a Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program in college. In June 1952, upon graduation, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Filling a variety of roles, Holmes served twice as a Maintenance Battalion Commander, the second in Vietnam; a member of the Guidance and Procedures Branch of the Logistics Directorate for the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Chief of Ordnance Branch of the Officer Personnel Directorate at the U.S. Army Military Personnel Center before becoming Commander of the Division Support Command for the First Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Riley, Kansas; and subsequently served as Assistant Division Commander-Support for the same unit, the first Combat Service Support officer to fill the position. Holmes - then made history - becoming the first combat service support officer to serve as Executive Officer to the Secretary of the Army from 1977 until 1979. Holmes' final post - before retiring in 1987 - was that of Commanding General, U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Command, where he oversaw the delivery of 30,000 tactical vehicles to the field with the highest level of user satisfaction yet achieved. On behalf of his service to the U.S. Army, in 1991, Holmes became am

Inductee in the 1999 Ordnance Corps Hall of Fame.

Arthur Holmes, Jr. was born on May 12, 1931 in Decatur, Alabama. He earned his B.S. degree in chemistry from the Hampton Institute – now called Hampton University, and his M.B.A degree from Kent State (Ohio) University. Holmes is also a graduate of the Naval War College. Moving on from the military, he became highly involved in business and governmental life serving for eight years as Vice-President of Logistics Applications and then President and CEO of the Automated Sciences Group, Inc. - a high-tech corporation with 300 computer scientists and engineers and average annual revenue of \$28 million. Holmes also served a seven year stint with the Montgomery County Planning Board, serving as a commissioner, and then vice-chair and chairman. Between 2002 and 2004, he served as Director of Go Montgomery! – a Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) agency devoted to implementing the County's Master Plan in all transportation regions. He took over the helm of DPWT, in October 2004.

Holmes is involved with many boards and organizations including Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. He and his wife, Wilma, have four children and six grandchildren, and they reside in Olney, Maryland.

Holmes was interviewed by 'The HistoryMakers' on July 29, 2008.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Arthur Holmes was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 29, 2008, in Olney, Maryland, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Major general Arthur Holmes (1931 - ) retired from the military as Commanding General, U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Command, where he oversaw the delivery of 30,000 tactical vehicles to the field with the highest level of user satisfaction yet achieved. He also served as Director of Go Montgomery!, a Department of Public Works and Transportation in Alabama.

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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:

Holmes, Arthur

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Holmes, Arthur--Interviews

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African American generals--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.

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### HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Arthur Holmes, July 29, 2008. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

## Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/6/2013 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.

## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage, July 29, 2008

Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Holmes, Section A2008\_100\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:30 2008/07/29

Arthur Holmes, Jr. slates his interview and lists his favorites. His mother Grace Lou Bradley Holmes was born January 14, 1913 in Pulaski, Tennessee. Grace had white ancestry from her grandfather. Grace matriculated at the eighth grade but earned a G.E.D. and taught herself typing. She was active within the AME Zion Church often serving as secretary. She presided over the women's missionary society. The family owned land in Decatur, Alabama but moved north following the TVA as it built dams. Arthur Holmes, Sr. and Grace married young after meeting outside a pool hall. In Decatur both extended families lived in adjacent or adjoining lots. With few facilities for blacks, children and adults made their own fun or hosted house parties. Holmes was in the National Honors Society and played basketball. His religious upbringing and the example of his parents contributed to his strong moral foundation and work ethic. Holmes idolized black athletes of the day. Despite segregation Holmes did not feel cheated out of a good education.

Family--History.

Tennessee Valley Authority.

Segregation--Alabama.

Segregation--Tennessee.

Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Holmes, Section A2008\_100\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:00 2008/07/29

Holmes was active in the "High Y" affiliated YMCA activities like basketball, which he played in high school and college. During World

War II Arthur did well as a carpenter for the Oak Ridge facilities. The eventful death of Dorie Miller profoundly affected him psychologically. Segregation was an accepted reality but he welcomed army desegregation. At Hampton University he majored chemistry and minored in biology but graduated with a C+ average. He did far better at missile and nuclear weapons officer training and staff college. The army paid for his MBA. Five out of his first ten years in the army were spent teaching electronics at the artillery school and guided missiles and nuclear weapons at ordnance school. From 1956-59 he was posted to Kaiserlautern, Germany. It was difficult to serve in an integrated army but not be able to mingle in segregated states. He joined the Ordnance Corps and taught at the Aberdeen Proving Ground from 1960-1964. Hampton University (Va.).

United States. Army--African Americans.

Military bases, American--Germany.

Military education--United States.

Military art and science--Study and teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Holmes, Section A2008\_100\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:20 2008/07/29

Holmes' unit assembled nuclear weapons during a contentious time in the Cold War. His classes covered the logistical matters of resupply and maintenance of weapons and equipment; Holmes variously commanded these dedicated units throughout the country. Lieutenant Colonel Holmes commanded the 62nd Maintenance Battalion in Vietnam for six months and oversaw various logistical divisions. His life was very rarely at risk. He enrolled at the Naval War College and joined the Joint Staff where he served as a staff officer in the Guidance and Procedures branch. In 1974 Colonel Holmes was chief of the ordnance branch for the army; he was surprised at the appointment. One of his responsibilities was to select officers in the ordnance branch and, in the downsizing of the army following the end of conflict in Vietnam, dismissing career officers, too. Black colonels were rare and generals were non-existent until Vietnam concluded.

Military art and science--Study and teaching.

United States. Army--African Americans.

United States. Army--Ordnance Dept.

Naval War College (U.S.)—Alumni and alumnae.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975.

Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Holmes, Section A2008\_100\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:20 2008/07/29

The downsizing of the army was conducted carefully through committee work that examined every service member's record. Just like equipment, soldiers need to continually upgrade themselves and meet or exceed increasing expectations placed on them. Holmes met Colin Powell as a major and again later when they each were Colonels and executive officers for defense secretaries. Holmes worked under Secretary of the Army, Clifford Alexander. Before this Holmes

commanded a Division Support Command. The XO appointment came easily partly because of a special efficiency report drafted by the commanding general from his time in Germany. Personnel management and logistics were changing in the new All Volunteer Army, which increasingly retained blacks and a worsening drug problem. In Vietnam he encountered numerous discipline problems with duty shirking, drugs, and an attempted fragging. He did not agree with President Carter's decision to grant amnesty to draft dodgers. He visited Panama several times during the Torrijos-Carter Panama Canal treaty negotiations. Holmes was promoted to Brigadier General in 1979, the same year as Colin Powell. He was very pleased to serve as the deputy commander of the Tank Automotive Command.

United States--Joint Chiefs of Staff.

United States. Army--Ordnance Dept.

Military discipline--United States.

Alexander, Clifford L., 1933-

Panama Canal (Panama)

Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Holmes, Section A2008\_100\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:15 2008/07/29

Holmes oversaw the development, production, procurement, and support of tank automotive equipment including tanks, personnel carriers, and other armed vehicles; he participated in the development of the Apache helicopter and the HMMWV; his MBA skill sets prepared him very well. As Brigadier General, Holmes dealt with contractors and R&D. Holmes retired in 1987 as a Major General and became an executive of Automotive Science Group. He left there in 1995. His training and experience in the army prepared him for management and interacting with its military clients. Holmes' logistics experience prepared him as commissioner for the Montgomery County Planning Board, a county project called Go Montgomery, then director of Public Works and Transportation. Holmes is concerned that black young people are complacent and unwittingly falling victim to lingering extant prejudices. He regrets being outside the country for most of the Civil Rights movement. Holmes remarried in the mid 1980s to a woman named Wilma. He would like to be remembered as an individual who was compassionate, fair, and did the best he could for himself and others.

Kent State University.

Montgomery County (Md.)

Retired military personnel--Employment--United States.

United States. Army--Ordnance Dept.