



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Littleton Mitchell

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Mitchell, Littleton
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Littleton Mitchell,
Dates:	December 19, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:30:32).
Abstract:	Association branch executive, civil rights activist, and tuskegee airman Littleton Mitchell (1918 - 2009) led the Delaware State Branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People as president for over thirty years until 1991 and was the first African American teacher of white children at Governor Bacon Health Center in Delaware City. Mitchell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 19, 2005, in Delaware City, Delaware. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_267
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Association branch executive, civil rights activist, and Tuskegee Airman Littleton Purnell Mitchell was born in the 1920s in Milford, Delaware, to Helen Ann Purnell and George Darnell Mitchell. His advocacy began at age thirteen, when he joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). During the late 1930s, he attended Howard High School, the state's only high school for African Americans. Upon graduation, he spent two years at West Chester University of Pennsylvania on a track scholarship before joining the Tuskegee Airmen during War World II. While he was there, he witnessed the building of the airfield at Tuskegee in 1941. He taught future pilots the art of instrument flying. His duties sent him to the Link Trainer Facilities and Schools in New York, and Chanute Field in Chanute, Illinois, as well as the Base Instrument Command Flying School in Texas. In February 1946, he was discharged from the U.S. Army. Encouraged by his fellow Tuskegee Airmen, Mitchell returned to college, and earned his degree from West Chester University of Pennsylvania and began a career in the psychiatric treatment of children and civil rights advocacy.

Mitchell led the Delaware State Branches of the NAACP as president for over thirty years until 1991. During his years there, he led their efforts to secure fair housing, equal access to public accommodations, and equal education and employment opportunities for Delaware's African American community. He became the first African American teacher of white children at Governor Bacon Health Center in Delaware City. He retired from teaching in 1984. His wife, Jane Mitchell, now deceased, became one of Delaware's first African American nurses. For many years, she served as the director of nursing at the Delaware State Hospital and along with her husband led efforts to desegregate the state's hospitals.

Mitchell served on the Delaware Humanities Council from 1991 to 1997. In 1993, the University of Delaware awarded Mitchell its Medal of Merit for sustained community service. He was also awarded the Delaware Bar Association's 2004 Liberty Bell Award for community service. For the Brown v. Board of Education 50th Anniversary Commission, he served as a presidential appointee representing Delaware.

Mitchell resided in Delaware City, Delaware, with his family until his death on July 6, 2009.

Littleton Purnell Mitchell was interviewed by the HistoryMakers on December 19, 2005.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Littleton Mitchell was conducted by Wilson, Shawn on December 19, 2005, in Delaware City, Delaware, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Association branch executive, civil rights activist, and Tuskegee airman Littleton Mitchell (1918 - 2009) led the Delaware State Branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People as president for over thirty years until 1991 and was the first African American teacher of white children at Governor Bacon Health Center in Delaware City.

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®.

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.

Controlled Access Terms

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

Persons:

Littleton Mitchell.

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer).

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer).

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews.
Littleton Mitchell--Interviews.

African American educators--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Army Air Forces. Fighter Group, 332nd.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Delaware Branch.

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

BusinessMakers

CivicMakers

MilitaryMakers

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 Littleton Mitchell, December 19, 2005. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 7/27/2011 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, December 19, 2005

Video Oral History Interview with Littleton Mitchell, Section A2005_267_001_001, TRT: 0:30:39
2005/12/19

Littleton Mitchell slates the interview and lists his favorites. He provides biographical information about his parents, Helen Ann Purnell and Littleton Van Mitchell. Mitchell shares some of his early experiences with racism and racist attitudes in the North. In particular, he recalls instances of racism in school, where African American schools were given the old supplies from the white schools. Mitchell also notes that there were differences in how boys and girls were treated in schools and in society. However, he says that some of his fondest memories of school are the teachers that encouraged his love of reading encyclopedias and other works, such as Hemingway.

African American families--Delaware.

Delaware--Race relations.

Teachers—Influence.

Racism in education--Delaware.

Video Oral History Interview with Littleton Mitchell, Section A2005_267_001_002, TRT: 0:29:51
2005/12/19

Littleton Mitchell tells stories about traveling to Spain and watching bullfighting in the 1970s. In addition, he discusses his academic and social experience at Howard High School, the only all-African American high-school in Delaware located in Wilmington. Mitchell gives credit to his teacher Mrs. Polk for encouraging his interest in travel and airplanes. He wanted to attend Flying Dutchman School, an aeronautical school in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, but could not afford the tuition. He shares why he wanted to attend an integrated college as opposed to an all-black college, and how he ended up at West Chester State College, where he was the only African American student in a class of 500. Mitchell explores the impact that Emmett Till's murder had on his relationship with white students, in particular white women. Despite the fact that he enjoyed college, he quit because he wanted to fly and then enrolled at Tuskegee Institute.

United States. Army Air Forces. Fighter Group, 332nd.

African American--Education, Secondary--Delaware.

West Chester University of Pennsylvania--Social life and customs.

Video Oral History Interview with Littleton Mitchell, Section A2005_267_001_003, TRT: 0:30:58
2005/12/19

Littleton Mitchell discusses his mentor at West Chester State College, Dr. Heathcote. He arrived at Tuskegee Institute in December 1941, after responding to advertisement for volunteers, however he was disappointed that facilities were not what were promised. While there, he saw the construction of the

Tuskegee runway as well as other facilities. He recounts instances of racism in the U.S. Army. Even though he did not see combat action, he taught future pilots the art of instrument flying. Mitchell shares stories about fighting against segregation and racism in Alabama.

United States. Army Air Forces. Fighter Group, 332nd.

United States. Army.--Race relations.

Racism--Alabama.

Video Oral History Interview with Littleton Mitchell, Section A2005_267_001_004, TRT: 0:29:43
2005/12/19

Littleton Mitchell talks about when he was sixteen years-old and looking for a job. During this time, he remembers meeting a migrant labor family living in a chicken coop. This prompted him to seek justice for migrant workers as the president of the state National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Mitchell says that after he left Tuskegee, he and his wife worked at Governor Bacon Health Center in Delaware City, Delaware, where he taught and his wife eventually became director of nurses at the state hospital. He speaks on his reaction to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his own political activism.

Public institutions--Delaware.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People--Delaware.

Social Activism-Delaware.

Discrimination in medical care--Delaware.

Video Oral History Interview with Littleton Mitchell, Section A2005_267_001_005, TRT: 0:29:21
2005/12/19

Littleton Mitchell provides examples of the civil rights activities that he undertook as president of the Delaware National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and as a private citizen. Mitchell says that he worked with his wife to de-segregate the hospitals in Delaware and to evaluate the status of conditions for African American patients in hospitals throughout the state. He notes that he continues to work for migrants' labor issues in Delaware, the rights of women and children, and that there have been improvements in their conditions. Mitchell concludes the tape with a reflection on the progress of the U.S. Armed Forces in relation to race and how he hopes that African American youth will recognize their responsibility to make the future better for the next generation.

Social problems--Delaware.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People--Delaware.

Public institutions--Delaware.

Discrimination in medical care--Delaware.