

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Calvin Peete

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Peete, Calvin, 1943-2015
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Peete,
Dates:	October 20, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:12:40).
Abstract:	Golfer Calvin Peete (1943 - 2015) won twelve major PGA tournaments between 1979 and 1986. He also won ten consecutive PGA driving accuracy titles between 1981 and 1990. Peete was the most successful African American pro golfer of his time. Peete was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 20, 2006, in Ponte Vedra, Florida. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_127
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

A renowned professional golfer, Calvin Peete made history by winning 12 major PGA (Professional Golf Association) tournaments between 1979 and 1986. One of the most prolific winners and one of the straightest hitters on the PGA Tour in the 1980s, Peete won the PGA's driving accuracy title for ten consecutive years (1981-1990). Before the emergence of Tiger Woods, Peete was the most successful African American on the PGA Tour.

Born in Detroit, Michigan on July 18, 1943, Peete was the eighth of nine children born to Irenna (Bridgeford) Peete and Dennis Peete, a Detroit auto factory worker. He was raised in Detroit, Hayti, Missouri, and on a farm in Pahokee, Florida.

At age 12, Peete fell from a cherry tree near his grandmother's house in Haiti and broke his left elbow in three places. Surgeons repaired the fractures but the elbow joint remained permanently fused, so Peete could never fully straighten his arm. Some golf swing analysts believe that this condition contributed to Peete's driving accuracy. It allowed him to create a golf swing path that brought him to return the club squarely from the back swing, back to the same position at impacting the ball. Peete was nicknamed "Mr. Accuracy" by other golfers for his ability to hit the ball consistently onto the fairway.

Peete lived in Florida during his teenage years and dropped out of school at age 15. For several years he supported himself by selling clothes, watches, jewelry, stereos and other wares to migrant farm workers up and down the east coast from areas like Florida to Rochester, New York. He first picked up a golf club in Rochester in 1966, at the "old age" of 23. Moving back to Florida, golf became Peete's obsession, and he looked for driving ranges with floodlights so that he could practice at night. He also took a night job managing apartments in Fort Lauderdale so he would have more time for golf. In 1971, Peete became a professional golfer. In 1975, he completed the PGA Tour Qualifying School and his first PGA Tour victory came in 1979, winning the Greater Milwaukee Open. In 1982, he had four PGA Tour wins. He continued a winning streak with two wins in 1983, one in 1984, two in

1985, including the Tournament Players Championship, and two in 1986. Among the others were the Texas Open and the Phoenix Open. The Players Championship was his most coveted win and earned him the position of being the most successful African American golfer at that time. In 1982, Peete earned his high school equivalency so as to be eligible for a U.S. Ryder Cup Team position. He was a member of the U.S. Team in 1983 and 1985.

After 1986, Peete's back and shoulder problems slowed him down although, he earned over \$2.3 million on the PGA Tour through 1993. At age 51, Peete started competing on the Senior Tour and retired from golf in 2001.

Peete is the father of five children (Calvin, Jr., Dennis, Nicole, Kalvinetta, and Ricky) from his first marriage. They were born between 1968 and 1975. He married Elaine (Pepper) Peete in 1993; they are the parents of two daughters—Aisha, born in 1993 and Aleya, born in 1996.

Calvin Peete passed away on April 29, 2015 at age 71.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Calvin Peete was conducted by Robert Hayden on October 20, 2006, in Ponte Vedra, Florida, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Golfer Calvin Peete (1943 - 2015) won twelve major PGA tournaments between 1979 and 1986. He also won ten consecutive PGA driving accuracy titles between 1981 and 1990. Peete was the most successful African American pro golfer of his time.

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:

Peete, Calvin, 1943-2015

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Peete, Calvin, 1943-2015 --Interviews

African American golfers--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Professional Golfers' Association of America.

Occupations:

Golfer

HistoryMakers® Category:

SportsMakers

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 Calvin Peete, October 20, 2006. 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.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Peete, Section A2006_127_001_001, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Calvin Peete was born on July 18, 1943 in Detroit, Michigan to Irenna Bridgeford Peete and Dennis Peete. His father was born in Tennessee, and supported his older sisters after his father died. After moving to Detroit, he worked at the Hamtramck Assembly Plant in Hamtramck, Michigan. Like Peete's paternal side of the family, Peete's mother moved from Tennessee to Detroit, where she worked as a domestic. Peete grew up with eight siblings on the east side of Detroit, where he attended the Joseph Campau School, and played in a vacant field across the street from his home. His parents separated in 1954, and Peete moved with his mother to Hayti, Missouri, where his maternal grandmother, Itaster Peterson, lived. There, he picked cotton, and adjusted to farm life. At thirteen years old, he moved to Pahokee, Florida to live with his father, who was then a sugar cane laborer. In Pahokee, Peete attended East Lake Middle School until leaving school in the eighth grade.

Family--History.

Children of divorced parents--United States.

Agriculture--Florida--20th Century.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Peete, Section A2006_127_001_002, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Calvin Peete left East Lake Middle School in Pahokee, Florida during the eighth grade. To support himself, he played pool, and obtained his license to sell wares to migrant workers along the Eastern Shore. In 1966, on the Genesee Valley Golf Course in Rochester, New York, Peete played his first round of golf, which sparked his passion for the game. He returned to the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and worked on his technique. Peete practiced daily, and played with other golfers at the Orangebrook Golf Course in Hollywood, Florida. While he never had a formal golf lesson, he received advice on his posture from golf instructor Bob Toski. In his early career, he found putting to be more challenging than tee shots. Peete became a professional golfer in 1971, when he won the Larry Little golf tournament at the Doral Country Club in Doral, Florida. In addition to golfing, Peete owned real estate in Fort Lauderdale. He also remembers breaking his elbow when he was young, although the accident did not impede his swing.

High school dropouts--Florida.

African American business people--Florida.

Adolescent medicine--United States.

Golf injuries.

Golf--Technique.

Golf--Tournaments--Anecdotes.

Golf--Study and teaching--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Peete, Section A2006_127_001_003, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Calvin Peete qualified for a Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) card in the mid-1970s. He won the 1979 Greater Milwaukee Open, the first tournament that he entered. After business owner Lowell L. Beggs of Amboy, Illinois saw Peete golf at the Quad Cities Open, he decided to become Peete's sponsor. In 1982, Peete won four PGA Tour tournaments, including the Anheuser-Busch Golf Classic, which he won again in 1983, and the Pensacola Open, where he played against golfers like Jim Colbert, Steve Melnick and Andy North. During this time, Peete's caddy was Bobby Morgan, with whom he maintained a long friendship. Peete won the 1984 Valero Texas Open, which African American golf professionals Charlie Sifford and Pete Brown had been prohibited from playing in the 1960s. In 1985, Peete won the Phoenix Open and the Tournament Players Championship, where his rival was D.A. Weibring. Peete also describes his golf technique, including the impact of his early elbow injury.

Golf--Technique.

Golf--Tournaments--Anecdotes.

PGA Tour (Association)--Certification.

African American golfers--Race discrimination.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Peete, Section A2006_127_001_004, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Calvin Peete won eleven Professional Golfers' Association tournaments between 1982 and 1986. In 1983 and 1985, Peete played for the United States in the Ryder Cup. He received the Vardon Trophy in 1984 for having the lowest stroke average, 70.56. Then, in 1986, he won the MONY Tournament of Champions and the Zurich Classic of New Orleans. Peete continued to golf, although he felt that he reached the height of his career in 1985, when he won the Tournament Players Championship. He also developed Tourette's syndrome, which negatively affected his playing. In 1993, Peete joined the PGA Tour Champions, and married his second wife, Elaine Pepper Peete, with whom he had two daughters, in addition to five children from his first marriage. In Jacksonville, Florida, Peete and his wife took part in The First Tee, a golf program for underserved children in urban areas, and attended church services at Faith Christian Center. Peete was also inducted to the African-American Ethnic Sports Hall of Fame.

Golf--Technique.

Golf--Tournaments--Anecdotes.

PGA Tour (Association)--Certification.

Tourette syndrome--Treatment.

Sports--Education--United States.

Adolescent Development--Social aspects.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Peete, Section A2006_127_001_005, TRT: 0:16:30 ?

Calvin Peete renewed his faith in God when he and his wife, Elaine Pepper Peete, began attending services at Faith Christian Center in Jacksonville, Florida. In the 1980s, Peete returned to school to obtain his GED certification. He talks about the importance of pursuing one's education, as well as his hopes for black golfers and the wider African American community. Peete concludes the interview by reflecting upon his life, legacy and how he would like to be remembered.

Tourette syndrome--Alternative treatment.

Continuing education.

Child rearing--United States--Social aspects.

Regeneration (Theology).

