

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
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Peete,
Dates:	October 20, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:12:40).
Abstract:	Golfer Calvin Peete (1943 -) won twelve major PGA tournaments between 1979 and 1986. He also won ten consecutive PGA driving accuracy titles between 1981 and 1990. Peete is 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 and now retired 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. They reside in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Calvin Peete was conducted by Hayden, Robert on October 20, 2006, in Ponte Vedra, Florida, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Golfer Calvin Peete (1943 -) won twelve major PGA tournaments between 1979 and 1986. He also won ten consecutive PGA driving accuracy titles between 1981 and 1990. Peete is 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-

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

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

African American golfers--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Professional Golfers' Association of America.

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 8/24/2012 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, October 20, 2006

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Peete, Section A2006_127_001_001, TRT: 0:29:00
2006/10/20

Calvin Peete was born July 18, 1943 in Detroit, Michigan to Irene Bridgeport Peete and Dennis Peete. Dennis, like Irene, probably came from Tennessee. Dennis worked at the Dodge Main plant. The first house Peete remembers living in was 2000 St. Albertus Pl. on the East Side. Peete was the youngest child for ten years. Peete was not aware of golf until a chance encounter with a stray ball in the alleyway by his house; he was amazed at how high the object bounced. In 1954, the Peetes separated and Calvin, Irene, and Margaret moved to Hayti, Missouri to live with their grandmother while their mother looked for work in Chicago. After a few years there Peete moved to his father's farm in Pahokee, Florida and reenrolled in the seventh grade at East Lake Middle School.

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
2006/10/20

Calvin Peete's experiences at school were not pleasant and he dropped out at fifteen. Peete started a business selling goods to farm laborers as they moved up the eastern United States. He was introduced to golf in 1966 in Rochester, New York. Peete initially had grip problems until the Vardon Grip was demonstrated. Peete moved to Fort Lauderdale and played golf routinely. He never received formal instruction beyond a three minute session on his form with Bob Toski. He consulted instructional booklets that covered the fundamentals. Peete always excelled at tee shots but putting was difficult because of variables like personal confidence and course breaks minutely affected the ball. Peete slipped into professional golfing in 1971 when he was awarded his first prize at the Larry Little Golf Tournament. He began preparation for PGA qualification in the apprentice program shortly thereafter. Through a golfing contact, Peete facilitated the acquisition of several rental properties.

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
2006/10/20

Calvin Peete competed in the PGA Tour qualifying process to earn his card. Peete was eventually sponsored by Lowell Biggs who saw him play at the Quad

Cities Open. The first tournament Peete won was also the first one he entered, the Milwaukee Open. Peete met most of the contemporary black professional golfers at the Ted Rhodes tournament before he joined the tour. Peete won four tournaments in 1982, which was his best year and qualified him for a top sixty placement. Peete's accuracy with his irons was high that year and his putting improved; his elbow injury limited his motions so his swings stayed in position. Peete played against many prominent golfers of the 1980s including Jim Colbert, Steve Melnyk, and Andy North. The 1984 Texas Open holds Peete's greatest winning memory because Charlie Sifford, who was never allowed to play it, urged him to victory. Peete's victory of the Tournament Players Championship was his penultimate accomplishment.

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
2006/10/20

From 1982 to 1986, Calvin Peete was at his professional peak. He won the Tournament Players Championship in 1985. Peete competed in the 1983 and 1985 Ryder Cup tournaments. In the 1985 Ryder Cup loss he performed well individually and in pairs. In 1984 Peete won the Vardon Trophy. Peete routinely jogged three miles a day and weight lifted but was stymied when his Tourette syndrome made it difficult for him to reliably control his body. Peete married his second wife Elaine "Pepper" in 1993 and had two daughters who play youth golf. Peete believes the PGA's First Tee program, which introduces disadvantaged children to golf, was partly inspired by a conversation he had with Commissioner Deane Beman. Peete joined the Senior Tour in 1993. He played eight years but his Tourette syndrome diminished his playing ability and he only finished in the top five once. As Peete's children grew older he came back into religion.

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
2006/10/20

Returning to the Church reminded Calvin Peete of the many lessons taught to him by his father. He eventually received a GED but had no trouble with the tests, especially in English and mathematics. Peete took over the coaching duties for Edward Waters College golf team from his wife Elaine "Pepper" when her responsibilities at the First Tee increased. He believes that, at the local level, society does not care as much as it should for children but that golf is an avenue for improvement. Unlike in Peete's youth, children have less reverence for their parents and deference to rules and structure; community reinforcement of these rules is also diminished. Peete has no regrets about where he is in his life.

Tourette syndrome--Alternative treatment.

Continuing education.

Child rearing--United States--Social aspects.
Regeneration (Theology).