

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Capt. Samuel Saxton

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Saxton, Samuel, 1929-2018
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Capt. Samuel Saxton,
Dates:	November 9, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:20:21).
Abstract:	Captain Capt. Samuel Saxton (1929 - 2018) was the former director of corrections for Prince George's County, Maryland and a retired captain in the U.S. Marine Corps. Saxton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 9, 2006, in Largo, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_136
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Captain Samuel Farlee Saxton was born on August 5, 1929 in Asheville, North Carolina to Mary Patterson and Thomas Odell. Although his father left the family, his mother, a former teacher, worked as a domestic to raise Saxton and his four younger siblings. He attended and dropped out of Stevens High School in Asheville during ninth grade in order to work full time. In 1944, he told the World War II draft board that he was eighteen when he was actually sixteen so that he could join the U.S. Navy. Saxton trained as a steward, one of the few Navy jobs open to African Americans, but served as a gunner during intense battles, including the Battle of Leyte in the Philippines in 1944 and at Iwo Jima, Japan in

1945.

At the end of World War II, Saxton left the Navy and earned his high school diploma. In 1946, he joined the U.S. Marines, training at Montford Point, a segregated facility for African Americans at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina. Rising through the ranks to become a commissioned officer, Saxton served in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. In addition to defending U.S. bases in Korea and Vietnam, he managed military prisons in Da Nang, Vietnam and at Camp Pendleton, California. After a serious car accident in 1975, Saxton retired from the Marine Corps and went on to earn his B.S. degree in criminal justice and his M.A. degree in rehabilitative counseling from the University of Maryland.

In 1975, Saxton joined the Montgomery County Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in Maryland as a deputy director and was later appointed as the director of the department. Renowned as an innovative corrections administrator, Saxton was recruited to be the director of corrections for Prince George's County, Maryland in 1983. During his tenure, he created several programs to improve inmates' living conditions and to facilitate their reintegration into society. His comprehensive drug treatment program, *The Awakening*, gained national attention and earned a visit from President Bill Clinton in 1994. Retiring from Prince George's County in 2000, Saxton taught courses in criminal justice at Prince George's Community College until 2004. Throughout his career, Saxton received numerous honors for instituting prison reforms, including the American Correctional Association's E.R. Cass Correctional Achievement Award and the 1986 Austin McCormick Award from the Correctional Education Association.

Saxton passed away on February 14, 2018.

Captain Samuel Saxton was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 9, 2006.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Capt. Samuel Saxton was conducted by Robert Hayden on November 9, 2006, in Largo, Maryland, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Captain Capt. Samuel Saxton (1929 - 2018) was the former director of corrections for Prince George's County, Maryland and a retired captain in the U.S. Marine Corps.

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:

Saxton, Samuel, 1929-2018

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Saxton, Samuel, 1929-2018--Interviews

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

African American government executives--Maryland--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Marine Corps

Occupations:

Captain

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Capt. Samuel Saxton, November 9, 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 2/5/2020 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 Capt. Samuel Saxton, Section A2006_136_001_001, TRT: 0:31:00 2006/11/09

Capt. Samuel Saxton was born on August 5, 1929 in Asheville, North Carolina to Mary Lou Patterson and Otis Odell. Saxton's mother, who has Cherokee ancestry, was born around 1901 in Clinton, South Carolina. His maternal grandfather, Sam Patterson, tried to start a barbershop in Clinton; but, after the Ku Klux Klan threatened him, abandoned those plans and moved to Philadelphia. Saxton's mother attended a two-year college, and became an English teacher in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. Saxton's father worked for his family's moonshine business in Asheville, which was run by Saxton's paternal grandfather, and condoned by the local sheriff, Sanford Brown. Saxton's parents separated when he was young, and he moved with his mother to Philadelphia for several months before eventually returning south. He recalls growing up in Asheville, where he fought with local gangs, and followed the news of World War II over the radio. Saxton worked as a delivery boy for a local Jewish grocery store owner to support the family.

African American families--North Carolina--Asheville.
African American children--North Carolina--Asheville.
Single-parent families--North Carolina--Asheville.
Gangs--North Carolina--Asheville.
Pearl Harbor (Hawaii), Attack on, 1941.
World War, 1939-1945.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. Samuel Saxton, Section
A2006_136_001_002, TRT: 0:28:40 2006/11/09

Capt. Samuel Saxton grew up in Asheville, North Carolina, where he and his siblings attended Hill Street School and Livingstone Street School. He was mentored by his male elementary school teachers, as well as his paternal aunt, Felicia Saxton, who was his middle school homeroom teacher. Saxton left school in the ninth grade; and, at fourteen years old, lied about his age to join the U.S. Navy during World War II. Although he wanted to serve in combat, Saxton was sent to Bainbridge, Maryland to train as a steward, and then deployed to the Pacific. He served during the battles of Leyte and Iwo Jima, and also became the fleet's cruiserweight boxing champion. During the invasion of Okinawa, Saxton was promoted to gunner's assistant. He obtained his GED certificate while serving in the Navy; and, after his discharge in 1946, returned to Asheville to finish high school. Saxton decided to reenlist in the late 1940s, and joined the newly integrated U.S. Marine Corps, where he became a sergeant major.

African Americans--Education (Elementary)--North Carolina--Asheville.

World War, 1939-1945.

United States. Navy--Gunners.

United States. Navy--Stewards.

Iwo Jima, Battle of, Japan, 1945.

World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--Pacific Area.

Montford Point Camp (Camp Lejeune, N.C.).

United States. Marine Corps.

United States Armed Forces--African Americans.

United States. Marine Corps--African American troops.

Capt. Samuel Saxton trained for the U.S. Marine Corps at Montford Point, and entered the 1st Battalion of the 6th Marine Regiment at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. In the early 1950s, he served in the Korean War as the security chief of Marine Air Control Squadron 2, which was assigned to battle North Korean insurgents around Daegu, South Korea. After the war ended, Saxton returned to Camp Lejeune as an instructor in the Infantry Training Regiment. In 1956, he married Sylvia Truslow Saxton, whom he met through her brother-in-law, a fellow Marine. At the start of the Vietnam War, Saxton was a sergeant at San Diego Marine Corps Recruit Depot. He was commissioned, and sent to advise a Vietnamese infantry regiment. He later commanded a 1st Military Police Battalion platoon in Da Nang, Vietnam, where he saw combat with North Vietnamese forces. Saxton returned to the United States in the late 1960s, and was assigned to investigate the corrections facility at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.

Montford Point Camp (Camp Lejeune, N.C.).

United States. Marine Corps--African American troops.

Korean War, 1950-1953--Participation, American.

United States. Marine Corps. Marine Air-Ground Task Force.

United States--Armed Forces--African American officers.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975--African Americans.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975--Campaigns--Vietnam--Đà Nẵng.

Military prisons--Vietnam--Đà Nẵng.

Military prisons--California--Camp Pendleton.

United States Armed Forces--Military police.

United States. Marine Corps.

Camp Pendleton (Calif.).

African Americans--Marriage.

Capt. Samuel Saxton was the operations officer at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton for four years, until being reassigned as the commanding officer of the Motor Transport Maintenance Company in Okinawa, Japan. There, Saxton broke up a white supremacist gang among the servicemen. Returning to Camp Pendleton, he suffered a car accident in 1975. Despite the prognosis that he would be paralyzed for life, Saxton regained the ability to walk. He went on to serve as the director of the Montgomery County Detention Center in Rockville, Maryland for eight years. Saxton then was hired to direct the Prince George's County Detention Center, where his challenges included cleaning up overcrowded jails and rebuilding the staff's trust after the previous director's mismanagement. Although he was opposed by Councilwoman Sue V. Mills, Saxton convinced the county to build a new facility for the prison in 1987. He received the Austin MacCormick Award and the E.R. Cass Correctional Achievement Award for his work in corrections.

Military prisons--California--Camp Pendleton.

United States--Armed Forces--African American officers.

United States. Marine Corps.

Traffic accidents.

Montgomery County (Md.). Dept. of Correction and Rehabilitation.

African American government executives--Maryland.

Correctional institutions--Maryland.

Prisons--Maryland.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. Samuel Saxton, Section A2006_136_001_005, TRT: 0:20:50 2006/11/09

Capt. Samuel Saxton describes the techniques that have led him to success as a corrections officer, including providing educational programs about parenting and finances; withholding privileges from maximum security inmates; and moving inmate labor outdoors in the winter to dissuade people who committed crimes in order to spend the cold months inside the jail. After retiring from his job as director of corrections at Maryland's Prince

George's County Detention Center in 1997, Saxton taught criminal justice at Prince George's Community College in Largo, and worked on several books about incarceration policy. He served as president of the Montford Point Marine Association, Inc., and worked to preserve the history of African Americans who served in the U.S. Marine Corps, especially war heroes like Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen, Jr. and Brooktoe Robinson. He reflects upon his life; his marriage to Sylvia Truslow Saxton; and how he would like to be remembered.

Montford Point Marine Association.

United States. Marine Corps--African American troops.

African American government executives--Maryland.

Correctional institutions--Maryland.

Prisons--Maryland.

Prince George's Community College.

African American college teachers--Maryland.

United States. Marine Corps.

African American families--Maryland.