

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Capt. Avis T. Bailey

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bailey, Avis T., 1949-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Capt. Avis T. Bailey,
Dates:	July 28, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:49:07).
Abstract:	Captain Capt. Avis T. Bailey (1949 -) was the first African American officer in the SUNOCO fleet and the first African American to receive a state-issued pilot's license. In 2004, he founded the Captain Avis T. Bailey Mariner's Foundation to educate youth about maritime careers. Bailey was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 28, 2007, in Baltimore, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_217
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Nonprofit chief executive, captain and ship pilot Avis T. Bailey was born on May 19, 1949, in Washington, D.C. to Roosevelt and Dorothy Bailey. He was raised by his mother after his parents separated when he was four years old. The youngest of eight children, Bailey was a precocious child, who learned American history through self-guided tours of Washington, D.C.'s monuments and museums. As a student at Banneker Junior High School in Washington, D.C., Bailey was selected from a citywide pool to participate in the First Scholastic Honors Program. His participation in the program continued until his graduation from Cardozo Senior High School in 1967.

Bailey was one of seven students selected from 450 applicants to compete for a military academy scholarship. Despite early dreams of becoming an astronaut, Bailey won a scholarship to the United States Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York. The Merchant Marine Academy was Bailey's first introduction to integrated education. One of only four African Americans in a student body of 1,000, he was often the object of racist jokes and harassment. As a midshipman at the Academy, Bailey visited more than twenty-three countries and ports of call and studied three foreign languages. In 1972, Bailey earned his B.S. degree in nautical science, becoming the twentieth African American to graduate from the Merchant Marine Academy.

Upon graduation, Sun Oil Company (now SUNOCO) hired Bailey as third mate, making him the company's first African American officer. In 1979, Bailey earned his pilot's license with the Association of Maryland Pilots and became the first African American in the nation to receive a state-issued pilot's license. As a ship pilot, Bailey traveled thousands of miles up and down the Chesapeake Bay. He became known by colleagues as "the singing pilot," who would belt out Johnny Mathis tunes from the helm.

In 2004, Bailey founded the Captain Avis T. Bailey Mariner's Foundation, a non-profit organization designed to mentor inner-city youth and to educate them about maritime careers. Bailey married Tamara Allenette Durant, a

former flight attendant, in 2000. He has three sons, Christopher, Jason and Jarrett Bailey, and two stepsons, Luke and Shannon Durant. Bailey retired from the Association of Maryland Pilots in 2006 after a career that spanned thirty-four years.

Captain Avis T. Bailey was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 28, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Capt. Avis T. Bailey was conducted by Cheryl Butler on July 28, 2007, in Baltimore, Maryland, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Captain Capt. Avis T. Bailey (1949 -) was the first African American officer in the SUNOCO fleet and the first African American to receive a state-issued pilot's license. In 2004, he founded the Captain Avis T. Bailey Mariner's Foundation to educate youth about maritime careers.

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:

Bailey, Avis T., 1949-

Butler, Cheryl (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bailey, Avis T., 1949- --Interviews

African American ship pilots--Interviews.

African American merchant mariners--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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. Avis T. Bailey, July 28, 2007. 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 Capt. Avis T. Bailey, Section A2007_217_001_001, TRT: 0:29:18 ?

Capt. Avis T. Bailey was born on May 19, 1949 in Washington, D.C. to Dorothy Heavlow Bailey and Roosevelt Bailey, Sr. His maternal grandfather, Jabez Heavlow, was born in Dayton, Ohio; and later moved to Washington, D.C., where he worked as a barber, and met and married Bailey's maternal grandmother, Maude Heavlow. Bailey's paternal grandfather, a Scottish immigrant, met Bailey's paternal grandmother in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. Bailey's parents separated when he was four years old; and, from that time, he and his seven siblings were raised by his mother, who worked long hours as a cocktail waitress. They lived in a poor, majority-black neighborhood in Washington, D.C., where Bailey joined the local gang at eight years old. He often explored the city on his own, and visited the Lincoln Memorial and Smithsonian Institution. Bailey excelled as a student at Walker-Jones Elementary School, and was placed in the honors program at Benjamin Banneker Junior High School.

African American families--Washington (D.C.).

African American children--Washington (D.C.).

African Americans--Social life and customs--Washington (D.C.).

African Americans--Childhood and youth--Washington (D.C.).

Single parents--Washington (D.C.).

African Americans--Divorce.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. Avis T. Bailey, Section A2007_217_001_002, TRT: 0:28:59 ?

Capt. Avis T. Bailey excelled at math at Benjamin Banneker Junior High School in Washington, D.C. He was enrolled in the honors program, and continued to take advanced classes at Francis L. Cardozo Senior High School, where he developed his aspiration to join the U.S. Air Force. He served as president of the science club and German club; and considered joining the Black Panther Party, but decided to focus on his education instead. During the eleventh and twelfth grades, Bailey participated in a college preparatory summer program for minorities at Georgetown University, where he considered attending upon graduating from high school in 1967. Instead, he enrolled at the United States Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York, where he was one of four black students, and faced discrimination from his professors. Bailey also remembers the March on Washington in 1963; his high school principal, Bennetta Bullock Washington; and his experiences of racial discrimination in Washington, D.C.

Racism--Washington (D.C.).

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Washington (D.C.).

African Americans--Education (Higher).

United States Merchant Marine Academy.

Washington, Bennetta Bullock, 1917-.

Washington, Walter E., 1915-2003.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. Avis T. Bailey, Section A2007_217_001_003, TRT: 0:28:51 ?

Capt. Avis T. Bailey matriculated at the United States Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York. There, he studied creative writing and science fiction under English professor A.A. Norton, and challenged his history professor's interpretive methods. He had difficulty adjusting to the regimented environment, and was frequently harassed by the upperclassmen. At the end of his first year, Bailey decided to return home to Washington, D.C., where he witnessed the riots provoked by the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. Bailey's mother, Dorothy Heavlow Bailey, convinced him to reenroll at the United States Merchant Marine Academy. He joined the drill team and glee club; and began traveling abroad, where he learned about other cultures and their attitudes toward race. He visited Chile, Italy, Libya and Greece; and learned to speak Spanish, German and Russian. He also remembers transporting cargo to the Mediterranean and South America during the Vietnam War.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

United States Merchant Marine Academy.

Nautical training-schools.

Racism in higher education.

Riots--Washington (D.C.).

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. Avis T. Bailey, Section A2007_217_001_004, TRT: 0:28:26 ?

Capt. Avis T. Bailey studied nautical science at the United States Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York. During his time there, he protested against the Vietnam War, including President Richard Nixon's invasion of Cambodia in 1970. Upon graduating in 1972, Bailey received a third mate's license, and became a commissioned officer of the U.S. Navy. He joined Sun Transport Incorporated, the U.S. Merchant Marine division of the Sun Oil Company; and became a third mate on the S.S. Texas Sun and the S.S. America Sun. In 1974, Bailey married his first wife, with whom he had three sons: Christopher Bailey, Jason Bailey and Jarrett Bailey. In 1977, Bailey applied for a master's license, and became the commander of the S.S. New Jersey Sun, where he was responsible for a crew of thirty-two people. Bailey worked as an apprentice ship pilot for a year, and then earned his chief mate's license. In 1979, he became the first African American to be licensed as a ship pilot in the United States.

Student movements--New York--Kings Point.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975--Protest movements--United States.

African American merchant mariners.

African American ship pilots.

African Americans--Marriage.

African American children.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. Avis T. Bailey, Section A2007_217_001_005, TRT: 0:28:26 ?

Capt. Avis. T. Bailey worked as a junior ship pilot for three years, and became a senior pilot in 1983. At that time, he joined the Association of Maryland Pilots. As a senior pilot, Bailey commanded cargo ships, container ships, auto carriers and naval vessels, including submarines. He also piloted the Hyundai New World on its maiden voyage, and prevented a collision after the ship lost power. Bailey learned a number of languages in order to communicate at foreign ports

and with his crew, and developed a reputation for singing during long voyages at sea. During the 1980s, Bailey lived in Reisterstown, Maryland with his first wife and their three children, Christopher Bailey, Jason Bailey and Jarrett Bailey. He also remembers the female mariners who were graduates of the State University of New York Maritime College in Throggs Neck, New York; and his experiences of housing discrimination in the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C.

African American merchant mariners.

Women merchant mariners.

African American families--Maryland.

Youth--Services for--Maryland--Baltimore.

African Americans--Marriage.

Divorce.

Video Oral History Interview with Capt. Avis T. Bailey, Section A2007_217_001_006, TRT: 0:25:07 ?

Capt. Avis T. Bailey developed a love of music at an early age, while working at the Howard Theatre in Washington, D.C. His favorite singers included Ray Charles and Johnny Mathis. In 2000, Bailey married his second wife, Tamara Durant-Bailey, who was a flight attendant on United Airlines. After retiring in 2006, he established the Captain Avis T. Bailey Mariners' Foundation, through which he funded scholarships for students at St. Ignatius Academy in Baltimore, Maryland, and commissioned a portrait of himself to accompany a shipping exhibit at the Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park. Bailey talks about his mentorship of aspiring ship pilots, and his involvement with the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity; NAACP; International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots; and the Masons. Bailey reflects upon his life, legacy and plans for the future; and concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.

African Americans--Social life and customs.

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

Nonprofit organizations--Membership.

Mathis, Johnny.

Cooke, Sam.