



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Roosevelt Lewis

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Roosevelt Lewis
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Roosevelt Lewis,
Dates:	September 6, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	9 Betacam SP videocassettes (4:17:20).
Abstract:	Colonel and federal government appointee Roosevelt Lewis (1943 -) served the United States in five Pentagon positions, including the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He is chairman and CEO of Air Tuskegee Ltd. and Global One Jets. He is also the owner of Moton Field, where most of the Tuskegee Airmen were trained as pilots. Lewis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 6, 2007, in Tuskegee, Alabama. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_246
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Colonel and federal government appointee Roosevelt Joseph Lewis, Jr. was born on August 25, 1943, in Greenville, Alabama to Clara Nell Mitchell Lewis and Roosevelt Joseph Lewis, Sr. Lewis and his family moved to Toulminville, Alabama when he was four years old; and he graduated as valedictorian from Heart of Mary High School in 1960. In 1964, Lewis received his B.S. degree in chemistry from Tuskegee University (formerly the Tuskegee Institute) in Tuskegee, Alabama. He earned his M.A. degree in transportation and business management from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

While attending Tuskegee University, Lewis enrolled in the United States Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps and met aviation pioneer Alfred "Chief" Anderson, who was the chief flight instructor and mentor to the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II. By 1968, Lewis gained recognition for his superior performance in the ROTC and was elected "Best Major in Command" by his unit in 1968, 1969, 1982 and 1988.

Lewis served the United States government's Department of Defense in five Pentagon positions, including the Office of the Secretary of Defense. As the chief of Vehicle Programs, he purchased the \$3.4 billion vehicle fleet for the U.S. Air Force and managed a \$34.8 billion budget as Executive Officer of the Logistics Engineering branch, Headquarters U.S. Air Force.

Lewis was a presidential scholar at the University of Alabama and served as a congressional intern with the Public Works & Transportation Committee for the U.S. House of Representatives. Lewis has also taught transportation courses for Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and the University of Maryland. In addition, he was previously former secretary of the Alabama Aeronautics Commission.

Since his retirement in 1991, Lewis has focused his efforts on aviation training for new pilots and has guided over 300 of them in obtaining their licenses. Lewis also serves as chairman and CEO of Air Tuskegee Ltd. and Global One Jets. He also owns historic Moton Field, where most of the Tuskegee Airmen, including his mentor, “Chief” Anderson, learned how to fly.

Roosevelt Joseph Lewis Jr., was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 6, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Roosevelt Lewis was conducted by Denise Gines on September 6, 2007, in Tuskegee, Alabama, and was recorded on 9 Betacam SP videocassettes. Colonel and federal government appointee Roosevelt Lewis (1943 -) served the United States in five Pentagon positions, including the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He is chairman and CEO of Air Tuskegee Ltd. and Global One Jets. He is also the owner of Moton Field, where most of the Tuskegee Airmen were trained as pilots.

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:

Lewis, Roosevelt

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Roosevelt Lewis--Interviews

Air pilots, Military--Interviews

Armed Forces--Officers--Interviews

United States. Dept. of Defense--Officials and employees--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Air Force.

Department of Defense

HistoryMakers® Category:

MilitaryMakers

PoliticalMakers

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 Roosevelt Lewis, September 6, 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 8/9/2011 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, September 6, 2007

Video Oral History Interview with Roosevelt Lewis, Section A2007_246_001_001, TRT: 0:29:10
2007/09/06

Roosevelt Lewis Jr. discusses his family lineage and his childhood. One of Lewis' childhood memories is visiting his grandparent's farm in Greenville, Alabama, where his grandmother saved him from a charging bull. Lewis remembers his family being very close, and describes an annual event called the "Big Meeting." Lewis had a positive, loving relationship with his mother; he remembers her as a talented and caring woman, and notes that she would take care of the other children in the neighborhood. Lewis recalls his mother and father were strict disciplinarians, and that both of his parents valued education. They encouraged their children to succeed and be well read.

African American families--Alabama.

Family reunions--Alabama.

African American parents--Attitudes.

Genealogy.

Video Oral History Interview with Roosevelt Lewis, Section A2007_246_001_002, TRT: 0:28:40
2007/09/06

Roosevelt Lewis Jr. elaborates on his maternal relatives, the Adams. He explains the origin of the name "Adams," and recalls two stories about the family. He also discusses his father's family, and his great grandmother, Lula. He remembers that Lula was a World War I widow, and she received a widow's pension from the government. Roosevelt Lewis Jr. takes time to describe his father's childhood, and states that his father worked for the International Paper Company for decades. Roosevelt Lewis Sr. was eventually promoted to paper maker, and medically retired from the company due to a number of cardiac arrests. Lewis also states that his father served in World War II and received medals for his service. Although he was honored numerous times, Lewis Sr. did not discuss his military experiences with his family, and often suffered from flashbacks of the war.

World War, 1939-1945--Veterans.

African American soliders.

African American fathers.

African American families.

Veterans--Mental health--United States.

Post-traumatic stress disorder.

International Paper Company--Employees.

Video Oral History Interview with Roosevelt Lewis, Section A2007_246_001_003, TRT: 0:28:50
2007/09/06

Roosevelt Lewis Jr. continues his discussion about his father and talks about his

paternal lineage. He states that this part of the family were land owners until they were tricked out of their title by a local lawyer. He remembers when his father came home from World War II, as well as the summers at his maternal grandparents' farm. He explains the social purpose of the cotton gin on the Mitchell plantation, and describes his childhood home in Toulminville, Alabama.

Sharecropping--Alabama.

African American children--Alabama.

World War, 1939-1945--Veterans.

African American families.

Video Oral History Interview with Roosevelt Lewis, Section A2007_246_001_004, TRT: 0:29:10
2007/09/06

Roosevelt Lewis Jr. lists his siblings and discusses his community in Toulminville, Alabama. He remembers the suburb of Mobile, Alabama as quiet, peaceful and family-oriented. He recalls growing up with Hank Aaron and notes that there were many athletic kids in his community. Lewis describes the games that he and his friends played as children and the race relations in Mobile, Alabama. Lewis recalls his tennis coach and the educated men who visited the park near his house.

African American neighborhoods--Alabama.

Aaron, Hank, 1934-

African American baseball players.

African American children.

Mobile (Ala.)--Race relations.

Video Oral History Interview with Roosevelt Lewis, Section A2007_246_001_005, TRT: 0:29:40
2007/09/06

Roosevelt Lewis Jr. discusses his educational experiences. He remembers attending a Rosenwald school, which was maintained by the community, until sixth grade. Lewis finished his primary and secondary education in Catholic schools after his parents converted to Catholicism, and had his first white teachers in high school. He recalls that the transition from the schools in Toulminville to Mobile, Alabama was a different experience, but his friend Charles Perkins was very helpful. Lewis reflects on the house fire that claimed his sister's life, and the toll her death took on their mother.

African American schools--Southern states--History--20th century.

African American students--Education (secondary).

Julius Rosenwald fund--Buildings.

Fires--Casualties--Alabama.

Catholic high schools--Alabama.

Video Oral History Interview with Roosevelt Lewis, Section A2007_246_001_006, TRT: 0:29:50
2007/09/06

Roosevelt Lewis Jr. discusses his experiences at Tuskegee University, in Tuskegee, Alabama. He also recalls his military service in the United States Air Force, and how he quickly moved up the ranks at his different posts, before leaving the United States Air Force at the rank of Staff Officer. Lewis also talks about the Civil Rights Movement and his personal experiences with the Ku Klux Klan. He says that his interactions with the Klan prevented him from following Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s non-violent protests, but he had great respect for him and the movement.

Tuskegee University.

Civil rights movements--History--20th century.

United States. Air Force.

Ku Klux Klan.

Video Oral History Interview with Roosevelt Lewis, Section A2007_246_001_007, TRT: 0:28:30
2007/09/06

Roosevelt Lewis Jr. continues his discussion about his involvement during the Civil Rights Movement at Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama. The Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program taught African Americans how to read, write and do arithmetic throughout the Black Belt counties in Alabama. Roosevelt recalls being shot at by white teenagers while picking up program volunteers from a church. He lists the educational opportunities he received while serving in the U.S. Air Force, including earning a Master's degree from the University of Alabama. This was a particularly important accomplishment for Roosevelt because of the university's segregated history. Roosevelt graduated as a Presidential Scholar from the University of Alabama and was a congressional intern. While in Washington, D.C., Roosevelt lobbied for recognition of the Tuskegee Airmen's contributions to World War II and to American history.

Civil rights movements--History--20th century.

United States. Air Force.

United States.--Army Air Forces.--Fighter Group, 332nd. World War, 1939-1945--Participation, African American.

University of Alabama.

Video Oral History Interview with Roosevelt Lewis, Section A2007_246_001_008, TRT: 0:28:40
2007/09/06

Roosevelt Lewis Jr. discusses his experiences as a congressional intern and his military career. He talks about the positions he held and the different bases where he served. He recalls when he was sent to Seymour Air Force Base in North Carolina to help the base pass the transportation inspection. Lewis recounts his experiences in the Philippines during Operation Earnest Will, which was ordered by President Ronald Reagan. He remembers when he achieved the rank of Colonel, and how proud he was that his father was able to see him receive his eagle pins. After he returned from the Philippines, Lewis became a professor at Tuskegee University in Alabama and worked with Alfred "Chief" Anderson to increase the number of African American pilots in the U.S. Air Force.

Military operations, strategy and tactics.

Tuskegee University--Faculty.

African American fighterpilots.

Interns (Legislation)--Washington, D.C.

Operation Earnest Will, 1987-1988.

Video Oral History Interview with Roosevelt Lewis, Section A2007_246_001_009, TRT: 0:24:50
2007/09/06

Roosevelt Lewis, Jr. takes time to discuss his vision for Tuskegee University, and hopes that the university will take measures to preserve and interpret the story of the Tuskegee Airmen. He also talks about his major concerns for African American youth, and points out that the educational system does not encourage them to pursue non-traditional fields. Lewis notes that his parents emphasized the importance of family and that he applied the lessons he learned

from C. Alfred "Chief" Anderson to his everyday life. He narrates some family photographs.

Tuskegee University.

African American youth--Education.

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