

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Hiram Little

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Little, Hiram, 1919-2017
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Hiram Little,
Dates:	September 10, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:56:12).
Abstract:	Post office manager and tuskegee airman Hiram Little (1919 - 2017) was a member of the 477th Bombardment Group. In April of 1945, Little was one of the African American enlistees who attempted to desegregate the officers' club at Freeman Field. He along with the other surviving Tuskegee Airmen received the Congressional Medal of Honor in 2007. Little was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 10, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_252
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Post office manager and Tuskegee Airman Hiram Emory Little, Sr. was born on March 31, 1919 in Eatonton, Georgia. When Little was young, his family moved from the rural town of Eatonton to Atlanta, Georgia where he attended David T. Howard Elementary and Junior High Schools. While in junior high school, Little was a charter member of Troop 94, the very first Boy Scout Troop in an African American school in Atlanta.

In 1941, Little enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He was trained at the Chanute Air Force Base located in Rantoul, Illinois, as an aircraft armorer in the Tuskegee Aviation Program. Little also served as a part-time instructor at the Cadet Ground School of the Tuskegee Army Air Base in Tuskegee, Alabama. Little served at the Tuskegee Army Air Base until December of 1943, when he applied for flight training. In 1944, Little graduated from bombardier school and in January of the following year, he was assigned to the 477th Bombardment Group as a crew member on a B-25 bomber. By late 1944, the 477th Bombardment Group was assigned to conduct combat training missions, but winter conditions reduced their flying time. They faced constant instances of racism from white officers.

In March of 1945, the 477th Bombardment Group was moved to Freeman Field, Indiana. Although the 477th trained with both the B-25 and the P-47 aircraft, the war ended before the 477th could be deployed overseas into combat. At Freeman Field, tension between white and black personnel increased due to strict segregationist policies. When Little, along with other black aviators, entered the whites' only officers' club, they were arrested. They had defied an illegal order issued by the commander of the 477th Bombardment Group. The commander had classified all black officers as trainees and decreed they were not allowed to use the staff officers' club. Instead, the trainees, who had already graduated from flight school, were required to use a second former NCO club, housed in a run-down building. This event became known as the Freeman Field Mutiny.

On December 1, 1945, Little was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army Air Corps and enrolled at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia to complete his academic studies. While attending Morehouse College, Little was hired to work for the Atlanta U. S. Postal Service. In 1955, he became one of the first African American supervisors in the Atlanta area. Little worked for the U.S. post office until he retired in 1978 as a mid-level manager. In 2005, at the age of eighty, he received a certificate in carpentry from the Atlanta Technical College. Little, along with the remaining Tuskegee Airmen, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President George W. Bush in 2007.

Hiram Little was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 10, 2007.

Little passed away on February 18, 2017.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Hiram Little was conducted by Denise Gines

on September 10, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Post office manager and tuskegee airman Hiram Little (1919 - 2017) was a member of the 477th Bombardment Group. In April of 1945, Little was one of the African American enlistees who attempted to desegregate the officers' club at Freeman Field. He along with the other surviving Tuskegee Airmen received the Congressional Medal of Honor in 2007.

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:

Little, Hiram, 1919-2017

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Little, Hiram, 1919-2017--Interviews

African American air pilots--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States Postal Service.

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

Occupations:

Post Office Manager

Tuskegee Airman

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|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 Hiram Little, September 10, 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 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 Hiram Little, Section
A2007_252_001_001, TRT: 0:27:50 2007/09/10

Hiram Little was born on March 31, 1919 to Ella Grant Little and Willie Little. His mother was born into a family of sharecroppers in Putnam County, Georgia in 1892. She was raised by her father, Adam Grant, after the death of her mother, Talula Grant. Little's father was born in 1890 near Eatonton, Georgia. He was also raised primarily by his father, as Little's paternal grandmother, a nanny, lived with her white employers. Little and his older brother

were born seventeen months apart, and lived with their father on the Spivey Plantation. There, Little's father was not a sharecropper, but rather made five dollars per month working the farm's saw mill. The farm was owned by John Greene Spivey, a rich man whose house had running water and electricity. Little befriended the farm's blacksmith, a Swede named Alex Anderson, as well as his wife, who was friendly with African Americans and ostracized by other whites. In 1933, Little's family moved to Atlanta, Georgia.

African American families--Georgia--Atlanta.

Plantation life--Georgia--History.

Video Oral History Interview with Hiram Little, Section
A2007_252_001_002, TRT: 0:28:40 2007/09/10

Hiram Little worked on the Spivey Plantation in Putnam County, Georgia, alongside seven other families. As a child, he once earned a dollar by picking a hundred pounds of cotton while it was heavy with dew. Little attended school at Texas Chapel A.M.E. Church until he was twelve years old, when the family moved to Atlanta, Georgia. There, he joined the Boy Scouts, and attended David T. Howard Elementary School, where he used indoor plumbing for the first time. His father found work as a plasterer, and later as a cook and custodian at a hotel. Little's mother worked as a laundress at Atlanta Linen Supply, but quit when some workers contracted tuberculosis from washing the linens of a local hospital. Little's family had electricity for the first time when he was a teenager, and he listened to the radio broadcast of Joe Louis and Max Schmeling's boxing match. After graduating from David T. Howard High School in 1937, Little studied chemistry at Morehouse College, and then joined the U.S. Army Air Corps.

Atlanta (Ga.)--Social life and customs.

African American families--Georgia.

African American students--Georgia--Atlanta.

United States. Army--African Americans.

Video Oral History Interview with Hiram Little, Section
A2007_252_001_003, TRT: 0:28:30 2007/09/10

Hiram Little hoped to attend Clark College, but matriculated at Morehouse College, where he received a scholarship. Little struggled in his classes; and, when the U.S. Army Air Force opened to African Americans, left to join the 99th Pursuit Squadron. He trained pilots, and became a bombardier under Chief Charles Alfred Anderson and Daniel “Chappie” James, Jr. Little was sent to Freeman Field in Seymour, Indiana, where Colonel Robert Selway maintained segregation by designating all African Americans as trainees and all whites as instructors with access to officer’s clubs. In 1945, the black officers attempted to integrate an officer’s club, and Little was one of 101 airmen arrested for refusing to comply with segregation. These events became known as the Freeman Field Mutiny. Little left the service that year. Decades later, he joined the Tuskegee Airmen Inc. organization, along with Lieutenant Colonel Charles Dryden and Norris Connelly. They were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2007.

Morehouse College (Atlanta, Ga.).

United States. Army Air Forces. Composite Group, 477th-
-History.

Freeman Field Mutiny, Ind., 1945.

African American soldiers--Social conditions--20th
century.

Video Oral History Interview with Hiram Little, Section
A2007_252_001_004, TRT: 0:31:12 2007/09/10

Hiram Little returned to Atlanta, Georgia in 1945 to finish his chemistry degree at Morehouse College. In 1948, he met Mozelle Harper Little at the local YWCA. They married, and raised three children. Little had a thirty-three year career at Atlanta’s post office, where he joined the union, and became one of the office’s few African American managers. He describes the improvements in employee diversity during his tenure. After the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Little took a leave of absence from work to register African American voters in Birmingham, Alabama. In his retirement, he remained involved in the Cub Scouts; and, as a member of the speaker’s bureau of Tuskegee Airmen Inc., spoke to high

school students about careers in aviation. In 2005, Little earned a degree in carpentry from Atlanta Technical College. He reflects upon his life and legacy; his advice to future generations; and how he would like to be remembered. Little concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.

Morehouse College (Atlanta, Ga.).

Voter registration--Alabama.

African American families--Georgia.

Civil rights movements--Georgia.

Postal service--Employees--Georgia.

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