

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Sanderson, Walter, 1921-2017
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr.,
Dates:	March 9, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:53:21).
Abstract:	Major Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr. (1921 - 2017) garnered a Purple Heart and two Bronze Star Medals for meritorious service in combat in World War II and the Korean War. Sanderson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 9, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_068
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

U.S. Army Major Walter Sanderson, Jr. was born in Washington, D.C. on March 20, 1921 to Yale Manning Sanderson, a teacher, and Walter B. Sanderson, Sr., a chauffeur. His siblings include younger brother, John and younger sister, Vera. After graduating from Washington, D.C.'s Dunbar High School as an honors student and salutatorian in 1937, Sanderson enrolled at Howard University, where he was a member of the Army ROTC. He earned his B.S. degree at Howard in 1941 and was awarded medals from Howard University President, Mordecai Johnson at the ROTC Military Day drill competition. After graduating from Howard, Sanderson was hired by the United States Postal Service in mail distribution in 1941.

Sanderson joined the United States Army in 1942 and saw action in World War II as an infantry reservist with the 25th Infantry Regiment, 93rd Infantry Division, a segregated unit of the United States Army composed entirely of African American soldiers led by African American junior and white senior officers. In 1943, Sanderson's unit began fighting in the Pacific Theater Campaign on Bougainville Island in the Solomon Islands Chain, near Guadalcanal Island, against Japanese forces. His unit performed combat patrols on other islands until combat on Morotai Island in 1945. In 1945, while serving on Morotai Island in Indonesia, Sanderson's company was cited for bravery. Division patrols earned the distinction of capturing Col. Kisou Ouichi, the highest ranking Japanese prisoner of war in the Pacific. In 1944, Sanderson was promoted from 2nd to 1st Lieutenant in his unit, the 25th Infantry Regiment, 93rd Infantry Division. In 1952, Sanderson served with the 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Division in the Korean War (1950 – 1953), suffering a shell fragment wound in combat.

Included in Sanderson's many accolades are a Purple Heart for wounds received in combat in the Korean War and two Bronze Star Medals for meritorious service. Sanderson was also the recipient of a United Nations Service Medal and Master Combat Infantry Badge. In 1965, after his 23 years in the military, Sanderson was hired as a systems analyst doing defense analysis for the U.S. Government, which earned him a nomination for National Civil Service League's Career Service Award in 1971. Sanderson was a longtime member of the Veterans of Foreign

Wars organization and the Second Infantry Division Association. Sanderson was married to late wife Juanita H. Sanderson. He has two adult children, Leslie Swift and Walter B. Sanderson III.

Walter B. Sanderson, Jr. was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 9, 2012.

Sanderson passed away on February 5, 2017.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 9, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Major Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr. (1921 - 2017) garnered a Purple Heart and two Bronze Star Medals for meritorious service in combat in World War II and the Korean War.

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:

Sanderson, Walter, 1921-2017

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Sanderson, Walter, 1921-2017 --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Army

Occupations:

Major

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 Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr., March 9, 2012. 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 Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr., Section A2012_068_001_001, TRT: 1:30:24 ?

Walter Sanderson Jr. describes his family background. Sanderson's mother, Yale Scott Manning Sanderson, was born in 1894 in Knoxville, Tennessee. Her father, John Wesley Manning, was born a slave in 1857 but was able to attend Yale University--his daughter's namesake--after his emancipation. Sanderson's father, Walter Benjamin Sanderson, Sr. was born in 1892 in Wilcox County, Alabama. He and his wife both attended Knoxville College. After they were married, Sanderson's parents moved to Washington, D.C. There Sanderson's father worked as a chauffeur and general maintenance man for the wife of a congressman. Sanderson describes his family's move to various neighborhoods in Washington, D.C. and shares memories from his childhood.

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Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr., Section A2012_068_001_002, TRT: 2:28:27 ?

Walter Sanderson Jr. discusses his father's upbringing in Gees Bend, Alabama and employment as a police officer in Washington, D.C. Sanderson then describes his own childhood and education in Washington, D.C. at Birney Elementary School, Shaw Junior High School and Dunbar High School. Having been born with Hemangioma, Sanderson was a shy, but good student. He participated in the high school cadet corps, graduating salutatorian of his class in 1937 and even serving as a personal escort to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt during one of her public appearances.

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Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr., Section A2012_068_001_003, TRT: 3:27:04 ?

Walter Sanderson Jr. talks about the famous African Americans of his day: the professional boxer, Joe Louis; track and field star Jesse Owens and opera singers, Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson. After graduating from high school, Sanderson received a college scholarship from the Washington Daily News and attended Howard University in Washington, D.C. Sanderson recalls his college experiences and his participation in the university's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program. He graduated from Howard University in 1941 with a bachelor's degree in mathematics. Sanderson remembers being aware of the fighting overseas during World War II and the activities of Nazi Germany. However, he also remembers the military's racist attitudes towards black soldiers. Sanderson received his commission to serve as 2nd Lieutenant of the 93rd Infantry Division's 25th Regiment. He also talks about the citizens of Louisiana's response to seeing armed African American soldiers.

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Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr., Section A2012_068_001_004, TRT: 4:29:25 ?

Walter Sanderson Jr. discusses the history of the 25th Regiment and the rigid segregation he experienced in the military. He describes his tour of duty in the Pacific during World War II, as well as his first combat experience against Japanese soldiers which was reported in the 'Pittsburgh Courier'. Impressed by Sanderson's leadership during the Battle of Morotai, his company commander recommended that Sanderson be promoted from First Lieutenant to Captain. Sanderson witnessed many casualties and describes them. After returning to the United States, Sanderson went to work for the post office. He also married and had his first child--a daughter, who was born on New Year's Day in 1947. Sanderson talks about his daughter, Leslie Gale Sanderson Swift, who had multiple sclerosis.

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Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr., Section A2012_068_001_005, TRT: 5:28:17 ?

In 1951, Walter Sanderson Jr. was re-called into active duty and sent to Fort Campbell in Kentucky where he trained enlistees in map reading and patrolling in preparation for their deployment into the Korean War. Sanderson recalls his positive impact on his students' test performance. In 1952, Sanderson fought in the Korean War where he witnessed the torture of Chinese prisoners by the United States military. Sanderson also recalls his interactions with white subordinates. He talks about how he was rescued by a white lieutenant general after he sustained serious injuries on the battlefield. Sanderson received a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star Medal for his service in the Korean War.

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Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr., Section A2012_068_001_006, TRT: 6:29:44 ?

Walter Sanderson Jr. comments on the inhumanity of war and race relations between black and white soldiers during the Korean War. He also remarks on the intense combat of the Korean War compared to that of World War II. In 1965, Sanderson was hired by the U.S. Government to work as a systems analyst for the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Sanderson describes his career with the U.S. Government, as well as his early retirement in 1977. Additionally, he discusses how the character of frontline warfare has changed since the Korean War. Sanderson reflects upon his legacy and explains how combat and family experiences have influenced his philosophy on life. He also describes his hopes for the African American community and the personal significance of President

Barack Obama's election. He concludes his interview by narrating his photographs and how he would like to be remembered.

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Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr., Section
A2012_068_Sanderson_Walter_06_MED_001, TRT: 1:13:59

Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Walter Sanderson, Jr., Section
A2012_068_Sanderson_Walter_06_MED_002, TRT: 1:02:19