Biographical Description for
The HistoryMakers® Video
Oral History with Julius Becton

Becton, Julius , 1926-

Alternative Names: Becton, Julius , 1926-

Life Dates: June 2, 1926-

Place of Birth: Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

Residence: Fort Belvoir, VA

Occupations: Military Officer, U.S. Army

Biographical Note

Military Officer and federal government administrator Julius W. Becton, Jr. was born on June 29, 1926 in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania to Julius Wesley and Rose Banks Becton. He joined the Army Air Corps in July 1944 and graduated from Infantry Officer Candidate School in 1945. While on active duty Becton graduated from Prairie View A & M College in 1960 and the University of Maryland in 1966 with a B.S. degree in mathematics and a M.A. degree in economics, respectively. He is also a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the Armed Forces Staff College and the National War College. Following his service in the military, Becton received honorary doctorate degrees from Huston-Tillotson College, Muhlenberg College, Prairie View A & M University, The Citadel, Dickinson College, and American Public University System.

Becton joined the 93rd Infantry Division in the Pacific at the end of World War II and was separated from the Army in 1946. However, he returned to active duty after President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981 to desegregate the military in 1948. Rising to the rank of Lieutenant General in 1978 he commanded the 1st Cavalry Division, the United States Army Operations Test and Evaluation Agency, and the VII Corps--the Army’s largest combat corps in Europe during the Cold War. Becton also served in
the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He retired from the U.S. Army in 1983 after nearly 40 years of service.

From 1984 to 1985, Becton served as the director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the United States Agency for International Development. He then served as the third director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency from 1985 to 1989 under President Ronald Reagan. In his mid-sixties, Becton began a new career as an education administrator. From 1989 to 1994, he was the fifth president of Prairie View A & M University--his alma mater--making him the first graduate of Prairie View A & M University to attain flag rank in the military. In 1996, he became the superintendent of the Washington, D.C. public school system.

His military decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, two Silver Stars, two Legion of Merit medals and two Purple Hearts; along with the Knight Commander’s Cross of the Order of Merit of Germany. Becton is married to Louise Thornton and they have five children: Shirley, Karen, Joyce, Renee, and Wesley. They also have eleven grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Julius W. Becton, Jr. was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 27, 2012

Related Entries

Becton, Joe [siblingOf]
Brother

Becton, Julius Wesley, Sr. [childOf]
Father

Banks Becton, Rose [childOf]
Mother

Becton, Julius, III [parentOf]
Son

Best, Joyce B. [parentOf]
Daughter

McKenzie, Shirley B. [parentOf]
Daughter

Strickland, Renee B. [parentOf]
Daughter

Johnson, Karen B. [parentOf]
Daughter
Army Command and General Staff College [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1961]

University of Maryland [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1966]

M.S.

Lower Merion High School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1944]

Diploma

Officer Candidate School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1945]

Commission

Prairie View A & M College [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1960]

B.S.

National War College [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1970]

Joint Forces Staff College [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1964]

Bryn Mawr Elementary School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1939]

Lower Merion Junior High School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to 1941]

Muhlenberg College [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

United States Army [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1944 to 1988]

Lieutenant General

United States Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1984 to 1985]

Director

Federal Emergency Management Agency [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1985 to 1989]

Director

Prairie View A & M University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1989 to 1994]

President

District of Columbia Public Schools [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1996 to 1998]

Superintendent of Schools

Marine Spilled Response Corporation [MEMBEROf]
Board Member

American Battle Monuments Commission [MEMBEROf]
Board Member

Valley Forge Military Academy [MEMBEROf]
Board Member

Florida A&M University [MEMBEROf]
Board Member

American Public University System [MEMBEROf]

NITV/SFL [MEMBEROf]
Board Member