

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter

PERSON

Carpenter, Joseph H., 1924-

Alternative Names: Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter;

Life Dates: June 19, 1924-January 22, 2021

Place of Birth: Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Residence: Washington, D.C.

Work: Stafford, VA

Occupations: Military Officer

Biographical Note

U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Joseph H. Carpenter was born on June 19, 1924 in Washington, D.C. Carpenter graduated from Cardozo High School in June of 1942. He briefly attended George Washington University from 1964 to 1966 where he studied liberal arts before earning a commission with the U.S. Marine Corps as a second lieutenant.

In May of 1943, Carpenter enlisted into the U.S. Marine Corps along with thousands of African Americans and completed basic training at the segregated boot camp at Montford Point Camp near Jacksonville, North Carolina. He was promoted to chief clerk in 1945 and became the first African American to be assigned duty at the U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Carpenter separated from the military in 1949 and worked as a civil servant in various government positions. In 1966, after briefly attending George Washington University, he re-entered the military and was commissioned into the United States Marine Corps as a second lieutenant. Carpenter was assigned as an officer with the 4th Civil Affairs Group and deployed during peacekeeping operations to Norway, Panama, and Puerto Rico, and Vietnam. Continuing to serve in data processing and other staff and clerical positions throughout his career, Carpenter rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel before retiring in 1986. In 1965, Carpenter was founding member of the Montford Point Marines Association, which was established to reunite veterans and active-duty Marines Corps personnel that trained at Montford Point Camp between 1942 and 1949. He is also a founding member of the Montford Point Marines Museum, which is housed at Montford Point Camp (now Camp Johnson).

In 2012, President Barack Obama bestowed upon Carpenter the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal for service as a Montford Point Marine. He was honored during a special ceremony at the White House in Washington, D.C with state officials, military personnel, and other African Americans to serve in the United States Marine Corps at Montford Point between 1942 and 1949. Carpenter has also been recognized by the Montford Point Marines Association for his efforts to preserve and share the legacy of the Montford Point Marines as pioneers in the United States Marine Corps.

U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel Joseph H. Carpenter was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 15, 2013.

Carpenter passed away on January 22, 2021.

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Chief Clerk

United States Marine Corps [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1943 to 1986]