

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Carpenter, Joseph H., 1924- |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter, |
| Dates: | February 13, 2013 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2013 |
| Physical Description: | 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:01:42). |
| Abstract: | Colonel Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter (1924 - 2021) , founding member of Montford Point Marines Association and the Montford Point Marines Museum, received the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal in 2012. Carpenter was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 13, 2013, in Stafford, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2013_041 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

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.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 13, 2013, in Stafford, Virginia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Colonel Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter (1924 - 2021), founding member of Montford Point Marines Association and the Montford Point Marines Museum, received the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal in 2012.

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:

Carpenter, Joseph H., 1924-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Carpenter, Joseph H., 1924- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Marine Corps. Montford Point Marine Association Montford Point Camp (Camp Lejeune, N.C.)

Occupations:

Military Officer

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 Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter, February 13, 2013. 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 Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter, Section A2013_041_001_001, TRT: 1:29:37 ?

Joseph Carpenter describes his family background. His parents were Mary Elizabeth Carpenter and Henry Edward Carpenter. They met as teenagers at Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. Carpenter's maternal grandparents were, Theresa Edlin and John Edlin. His grandmother was white, while his grandfather was of African American and Native American descent. Carpenter's grandfather owned his own business in Washington, D.C., a coal and ice company. On his father's side of the family, Carpenter recalls often visiting his paternal grandparents at their home in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Carpenter and his five siblings grew up in Washington, D.C. He attended segregated schools his entire childhood education and actually met his future wife at Lovejoy Elementary School in Washington, D.C.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter, Section A2013_041_001_002, TRT: 2:32:14 ?

Joseph Carpenter talks about how he learned how to type at Brown Junior High School, which assisted him when he attended Cardozo High School. Because of his proficient typing skills, Carpenter was assigned office duty upon joining the U.S. Marine Corps. Carpenter was raised in the Catholic church and his family attended St. Cyprian Catholic church when he was a boy. He also describes the neighborhood he grew up in and his experiences in junior high school and high school. In 1943, Carpenter joined the U.S. Marine Corps. He describes traveling by train through the "Jim Crow" South in order to reach Montford Point in North Carolina for boot camp training.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter, Section A2013_041_001_003, TRT: 3:29:57 ?

Joseph Carpenter describes his arrival to Montford Point, North Carolina where he completed his basic training at the segregated U.S. Marine Corps boot camp. His drill instructor was tough, but considerate, and there were limited interactions between black and white Marines. Carpenter recalls the distinguished history and reputation of the U.S. Marine Corps and its appeal for enlistees. However, he also talks about the Ribbon River Creek incident where a Marine Corps drill instructor's exercise caused six recruits to drown in a creek. After boot camp, Carpenter was assigned to work in the battalion company office instead of having to do combat duty in World War II.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter, Section A2013_041_001_004, TRT: 4:29:08 ?

Joseph Carpenter talks about his employment as an office clerk with the U.S. Marine Corps. As a clerk, Carpenter was responsible for preparing reports, typing muster rolls, and performing other administrative work. He talks about what it was like to remain at Montford Point, North Carolina, while his platoon fought overseas in World War II. In 1945, Carpenter was promoted to chief office clerk where he became the first African American assigned to duty at the U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Carpenter ended his service in the military that same year and went to work in various civil service positions--including as a data processor and project officer for the U.S. Marine Corps.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter, Section A2013_041_001_005, TRT: 5:31:51 ?

Joseph Carpenter re-entered the military in 1966 and was commissioned into the U.S. Marine Corps as a second lieutenant. Subsequently, Carpenter was assigned as an officer to the 4th Civil Affairs Group. He was then deployed during peacekeeping operations to Vietnam, Panama, Norway, and Puerto Rico. Additionally, Carpenter continued to serve as a data processor and in other staff and clerical positions throughout his career. In 1986, Carpenter was promoted to lieutenant colonel before retiring. Carpenter discusses the highlights of his service in the U.S. Marine Corps. He also reflects on the social changes, such as integration, which occurred in the U.S. Marine Corps during his service.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lt. Col. Joseph Carpenter, Section A2013_041_001_006, TRT: 6:28:55 ?

Joseph Carpenter talks about the Montford Point Marines receiving a U.S. Congressional Gold Medal in 2012, for recognition of their military service. Carpenter and his fellow Marines were honored in a special ceremony at the White House in Washington, D.C. Carpenter notes that he was a founding member of the Montford Point Marines Association, which was established in 1965 to reunite veterans and active-duty U.S. Marines Corps personnel that trained at Montford Point Camp between 1942 and 1949. Carpenter reflects on his legacy and the legacy of the Montford Point Marines. He expresses regret for not pursuing a college degree. Carpenter describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, talks about his family, and explains that he would like to be remembered as a pioneer that helped to integrate the U.S. Marine Corps and make it more accessible to blacks.

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