

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Kent, Carlton, 1957-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent,
Dates:	February 16, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:46:12).
Abstract:	Sergeant major Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent (1957 -) was the 16th Sergeant Major of the United States Marine Corps Kent was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 16, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_052
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Major Carlton W. Kent was born on November 5, 1957 in Memphis, Tennessee. Kent graduated from South Side High School in Memphis. His military education includes graduating from the Army Airborne School and Parachute Riggers School in 1981, the Marine Corps Drill Instructor School in 1989, and the Army Sergeants Major Academy in 1994.

In 1976, Kent completed recruit training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in Parris Island, South Carolina and was assigned to the 1st Marine Brigade. Kent was transferred to the Marine Security Guard Battalion where he served as a Marine security guard at the American Embassy in Kinshasa, Zaire and Panama. In 1983, Kent reported to Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, California for duty as a drill instructor, senior drill instructor, and battalion drill master with the First Battalion. Kent was meritoriously promoted to Gunnery Sergeant in 1985. Following his promotion, Kent briefly served as Platoon Sergeant with the 3rd Air Delivery Platoon, and then reported to Hawaii where he was assigned Company Gunnery Sergeant with the Engineer Company, 1st Marine Brigade. In February 1990, Kent was promoted to First Sergeant and assigned as First Sergeant, Marine Aviation and Training Support Group, Pensacola, Florida.

Following his graduation from the Army Sergeants Major Academy in 1994, Kent was assigned as First Sergeant, and then later as Sergeant Major of the 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment. In May 2001, Kent was transferred to Stuttgart, Germany where he was assigned to the position of Sergeant Major of Marine Forces in Europe. In 2004, Kent reported to Camp Pendleton, California to serve as the Sergeant Major of the I Marine Expeditionary Force. He was appointed as the 16th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps in April 2007 and served in this position until June 2011.

Kent's military honors include the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with Gold Star, the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals, and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, and the Combat Action Ribbon. He is the recipient of the General Gerald C.

Thomas Award for leadership.

U.S. Sergeant Major Carlton W. Kent was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 16, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 16, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Sergeant major Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent (1957 -) was the 16th Sergeant Major of the United States Marine Corps

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:

Kent, Carlton, 1957-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Kent, Carlton, 1957- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Marine Corps

Occupations:

Sergeant 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 Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent, February 16, 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 Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent, Section A2013_052_001_001, TRT: 1:29:02 ?

Carlton W. Kent describes his family background. Kent's parents were Helen Banister Kent and Nathaniel Kent; both born in Memphis Tennessee in 1919. Kent's father died when he was nine years old. Kent's maternal grandmother's first name was Christine and his maternal grandfather, Frank Stokes was a famous blues player during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Kent had seven siblings, who all grew up in Memphis. Kent describes his childhood neighborhood and remembers the famous 'Ritz Show Theatre' and 'Stax Records' being not too far from where he lived. He also recalls being bussed to school and how that introduced him to other people of different nationalities at his high school. In addition, he explains that attending church was an important part of his family life.

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Video Oral History Interview with Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent, Section A2013_052_001_002, TRT: 2:29:49 ?

Carlton W. Kent worked from the time he was ten years old until he joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1975. He describes his various childhood jobs, which included working as a grocery store clerk and at the Holiday Inn. Kent attended Lincoln Junior High School in Memphis, Tennessee and tells how he was suspended after talking back to a teacher. He recalls the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, and the riots in his neighborhood that followed. Kent attended South Side High School in Memphis. He did well academically, and participated on the basketball and track and field team. Kent joined the U.S. Marine Corps in his senior year of college after listening to a recruiter come and speak to his school. After graduating high school in 1975, he went to the U.S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot in Parris Island, South Carolina to begin thirteen weeks of boot camp training.

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Video Oral History Interview with Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent, Section A2013_052_001_003, TRT: 3:28:23 ?

Carlton W. Kent describes his training at the U.S. Marine Corps' boot camp and remembers how recruits had to ask their drill instructor for permission anytime they wanted to use the bathroom. He explains that the most difficult part of boot camp was the lack of autonomy--he could not do what he wanted, only what he was told to do. Kent discusses his graduation from basic training in 1976 and his assignment to the First Marine Brigade in Hawaii. In 1978, Kent received orders for embassy duty in Kinshasa, Zaire--and later Panama.

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Video Oral History Interview with Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent, Section A2013_052_001_004, TRT: 4:29:12 ?

Carlton W. Kent talks about his mentors in U.S. Marine Corps boot camp and recalls his tours of duty at embassies in Zaire and Panama. He also describes attending the U.S. Army Airborne School at Fort Benning in 1981. Two years later, in 1983, Kent was transferred to the U.S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, California, where he served as a drill instructor. He describes his promotion to Gunnery Sergeant in 1985 and details the rank's role and chain of command within the U.S. Marine Corps. Kent recalls the Gulf War and explains that he did not fight in it because he had been assigned to serve as a drill instructor at the Naval Aviation Officer Candidate School in Pensacola, Florida.

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Video Oral History Interview with Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent, Section A2013_052_001_005, TRT: 5:30:22 ?

In 1992, Carlton W. Kent was transferred from his duties as First Sergeant with the Marine Aviation and Training Support Group in Pensacola, Florida to the 4th Marine Regiment in Okinawa, Japan. He describes his duties as a First Sergeant in Japan and also comments on the participation of women in the Marine Corps. Additionally, he discusses the racial tensions, which existed in the U.S. Armed Forces--particularly during the Vietnam War. Kent also revisits the military's "Don't ask, don't tell" policy. In 2001, Kent was transferred to Marine Forces Europe in Stuttgart, Germany. He remembers his deployment into Iraq in 2004 as Sergeant Major of the I Marine Expeditionary Force--following the September 11th attacks of 2001. Kent talks about the U.S. Marine Corps' military operations in Fallujah. He also recalls his first interview for the rank Sergeant Major of the U.S. Marine Corps in 2003, a year before his deployment.

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Video Oral History Interview with Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent, Section A2013_052_001_006, TRT: 6:19:24 ?

Carlton W. Kent recalls his second nomination in 2007 to the rank of Sergeant Major of the U.S. Marine Corps. He also discusses highlights from his military career and reflects on the election of President Barack Obama. Kent remarks on the need for employers to understand how military experience translates into work experience, in order to help veterans transition more smoothly into civilian life. He talks about his wife and two daughters, and also describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community. Additionally, he considers his legacy and shares how he would like to be remembered.

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