

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joe Geeter, III

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Geeter, Joe, III
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Joe Geeter, III,
Dates:	March 26, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:04:57).
Abstract:	Noncommissioned officer Joe Geeter, III (1958 -) was the 16th National President of the Montford Point Marine Association. He retired from the U.S. Marine Corps after twenty-five years of service, and became the corporate relations manager for AmeriGas Propane, Inc. Geeter was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 26, 2013, in Limerick, Pennsylvania. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_086
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

U.S. Marine Corps Master Gunnery Sergeant Joseph H. Geeter was born in Chicago, Illinois. He earned his B.S. degree in management from Park College. In January 1976, Geeter enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and underwent training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot and Basic Logistics School where he graduated as a class honor graduate. During his first enlistment, Geeter served in all three active Marine Divisions and earned meritorious promotion to Corporal in 1978. In 1981, Geeter was assigned to the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) in Beaufort, South Carolina where he served in logistics and participated in the NATO exercise Ocean Venture in 1982. He soon transferred to Okinawa, Japan and became the Assistant Group Logistics Chief and Platoon Sergeant, Headquarters and Service Company of the 3rd Force Service Support Group (FSSG). He was then reassigned in 1984 to MCAS, Beaufort and served as the Logistics Chief of Marine Air Control Squadron Five where he coordinated and participated in several field exercises. In 1991, Geeter was deployed to the Republic of the Philippines and served as the Operations Chief and Detachment Gunnery Sergeant for Combat Service Support Detachment-35 in support of MAGTF 4-90. He soon transferred to Okinawa and served as the Logistics Chief of the Tactical Exercise Control Group in the 3rd Surveillance Reconnaissance and Intelligence Group, III MEF. During this tour, Geeter participated in Cobra Gold '95 in the Kingdom of Thailand.

Geeter completed the Equal Opportunity Advisor's Course at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute and was promoted to Master Gunnery Sergeant in 1999. He then was assigned as the Equal Opportunity Advisor to the Air Station Commanding Officer aboard MCAS, Beaufort. After retiring in 2001, Geeter was appointed as the Corporate Employee Relations Manager at the corporate offices of AmeriGas Propane.

Geeter served as the 16th National President of the Montford Point Marine Association from 2005 to 2009. During the 2010 National Convention, Geeter was inducted into the Montford Point Marine Association Hall-of-Fame. Geeter also served as the National Legislative Officer and the National Public Relations officer for the Montford Point Marine Association. He is also a lifetime member of the NAACP, the 1st & 3rd Marine Division

Associations, and the American Legion.

In 1998, Geeter received a Special President's Award from the National President of the Montford Point Marine Association for his work with the Beaufort Chapter, and the James Calendar Award in 1999 for his continued efforts on a national level for the Montford Point Marine Association. He was honored with the prestigious NAACP Roy Wilkins Renown Service Award for his significant contributions to the Marine Corps in the area of equal opportunity and community involvement. Geeter's military honors include the Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal, the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal and the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal.

U.S. Marine Corps Master Gunnery Sergeant Joseph H. Geeter was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 26, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Joe Geeter, III was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 26, 2013, in Limerick, Pennsylvania, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Noncommissioned officer Joe Geeter, III (1958 -) was the 16th National President of the Montford Point Marine Association. He retired from the U.S. Marine Corps after twenty-five years of service, and became the corporate relations manager for AmeriGas Propane, Inc.

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:

Geeter, Joe, III

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Geeter, Joe, III--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Marine Corps

Occupations:

Noncommissioned 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 Joe Geeter, III, March 26, 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 Joe Geeter, III, Section A2013_086_001_001, TRT: 1:28:24 ?

Joe Geeter, III was born on September 17, 1958 in Chicago, Illinois to Elma Geeter and Joe Geeter, Jr. Geeter's maternal grandfather, Ralph Piper, served in the 54th Ordnance Company of the U.S. Army during World War II, and took part in the D-Day invasion of Normandy, France as a member of George Patton's U.S. Third Army. After the war, he met and married Anita Piper. Geeter's mother was born in Hazlehurst, Mississippi, and raised on the South Side of Chicago, where she graduated from Englewood High School. His paternal grandfather, Joe Geeter, Sr., served as an officer of the Chicago Police Department for thirty years. He went by the nickname Indian Joe, as his peers thought he was Native American, and was partnered with Sylvester "Two-Gun Pete" Washington. Geeter's father worked a variety of jobs, including as a freelance photographer for the Chicago Sun-Times. Geeter and his two siblings were raised Catholic in Chicago's Morgan Park neighborhood, where they attended Holy Name of Mary School.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Geeter, III, Section A2013_086_001_002, TRT: 2:29:27 ?

Joe Geeter, III transferred from the predominately white, all-boys Mendel Catholic High School to Morgan Park High School in 1973 due to disciplinary issues. While at Morgan Park High School, Geeter's grades improved, and teachers like Joseph Gonski cultivated his interest in history. Geeter also joined the bowling team, and was involved in Model United Nations. His best friend, who joined the U.S. Marine Corps ahead of him, referred him to a recruiter; and in January of 1976, Geeter enrolled in the delayed entry program while completing his last year of high school. Due to his previous transfer, Geeter was a few credits short of graduation, which he made up in summer school. Soon after his eighteenth birthday, Geeter was sent to boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, California. Prior to graduation, he fought a racist recruit who had harassed him throughout his training. Geeter was reprimanded, and granted an administrative graduation. He recalls searching for his estranged father.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Geeter, III, Section A2013_086_001_003, TRT: 3:29:54 ?

Joe Geeter, III began training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in 1976. While there, he was denied the right to vote in the presidential election, despite being of legal age. Following boot camp, Geeter was sent to the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School in Twentynine Palms, California, but was forced out of the program by a prejudice instructor. Geeter transferred to the logistics school at Camp Pendleton at Del Mar, where he graduated at the top of his class. He then joined the 1st Marine Division, but was deployed in 1978 to Okinawa Island, Japan, where he was assigned to the 3rd Marine Division. After returning to the United States, Geeter was stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, and the Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. In 1987, Geeter was promoted to gunnery sergeant, and served as a recruiter in Joliet, Illinois. He talks about the television adaptation of 'Roots' and Louis Cameron Gossett, Jr.'s role as a U.S. Marine Corps instructor in 'An Officer and a Gentleman.'

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Geeter, III, Section A2013_086_001_004, TRT: 4:29:28 ?

Joe Geeter, III moved to Richton Park, Illinois in 1987, where he was assigned a recruiter position in the City of Joliet. He spent Sundays after church with his maternal grandmother, Anita Piper, before she moved to New Jersey to live with his mother, Elma Geeter. He also reconnected with his father, Joe Geeter, Jr. and paternal grandfather, Joe Geeter, Sr. In an effort to learn more about former African American U.S. Marines, Geeter became a member of the Montford Point Marine Association, Inc. In 1990, he completed his third tour of duty in Okinawa, Japan; and in 1991, returned to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, where he befriended decorated U.S. Marine veteran Jimmie Howard. After Howard's death, Geeter worked to preserve his legacy, and eventually the USS Howard DDG 83 was named in his honor. Geeter describes his recruiting philosophy, and recounts the history of African Americans in the U.S. Marine Corps as well as the events that led Jimmie Howard to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Geeter, III, Section A2013_086_001_005, TRT: 5:33:21 ?

Joe Geeter, III left San Diego, California in 1995 to become a master sergeant at the Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort in Beaufort, South Carolina. There, he mentored the incoming second lieutenant. Later, Geeter was trained at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute at Patrick Air Force Base to work as an equal opportunity advisor. While on active duty, he earned a bachelor's degree in operational management at Park College in Parkville, Maryland in 1999. He and comrade Curtis Brickshire decided to leave the military in 2001, and Geeter was hired as an employee relations representative at AmeriGas Propane, Inc. For his military service, Geeter received multiple awards, including the NAACP's Roy Wilkins Renown Service Award. In 2005, he became the national president of the Montford Point Marine Association, Inc. After the Tuskegee Airmen were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2007, Geeter began lobbying for the Montford Point Marines to receive the medal.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Geeter, III, Section A2013_086_001_006, TRT: 6:26:48 ?

Joe Geeter, III wrote the first bill lobbying for the Congressional Gold Medal to be awarded to the Montford Point Marines. He aided in the filming of the 2006 documentary 'Marines of Montford Point: Fighting for Freedom,' which featured actor Louis Cameron Gossett, Jr. as the narrator. It was later aired on PBS in 2007, and helped draw attention to the Montford Point Marine Association, Inc. and Geeter's cause. Efforts to pass the bill were initially thwarted by the 2010 midterm election, at which time many supporters were replaced. Geeter invited James Amos, the commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, to deliver a speech at a rallying convention in Atlanta, Georgia, which was broadcast on CNN. Congressional sponsors Corrine Brown and Kay Hagan presented the bill in 2011, and it was passed by unanimous vote and signed by President Barack Obama. Geeter concludes this part of the interview reflecting upon his life, and personal and military legacy as well as the support of family and association members.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Geeter, III, Section A2013_086_001_007, TRT: 7:07:35 ?

Joe Geeter, III narrates his photographs.