

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Sgt. Maj. Alford McMichael

PERSON

McMichael, Alford L.

**Alternative Names:** Sgt. Maj. Alford McMichael;

**Life Dates:** February 24, 1952-

**Place of Birth:** Hot Spring, Arkansas, USA

**Residence:** Alexandria, VA

**Work:** Arlington, VA

**Occupations:** Sergeant

## Biographical Note

U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Major Alford L. McMichael was born on February 24, 1952 in Hot Springs, Arkansas. After graduating from Hot Springs High School, McMichael enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on August 27, 1970 at the Recruit Depot in San Diego California. McMichael completed Infantry Training School and Basic Infantry Training in 1971 at Camp Pendleton, California and went on to graduate from Staff Noncommissioned Officers Academy Advanced School and the Marine Security Guard School.

In 1973, McMichael was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines at Camp Pendleton. He returned to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego in December of 1973 where he served as a drill instructor, a series gunnery sergeant, and a battalion drill master. After completing Marine Security Guard School in 1979, McMichael was assigned to the American Embassy in Copenhagen, Denmark. In December of 1984, he transferred to Okinawa, Japan to serve as the First Sergeant of Company C, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion. McMichael was appointed deputy director of the Staff Noncommissioned Officers Academy at the Marine Corps Air Station in El Toro, California in 1988 and served there as director from 1989 to 1991.

McMichael was transferred to Quantico for a three-year stint as the Sergeant Major of Officer Candidates School and then deployed to Okinawa, Japan where he served as the Sergeant Major of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit until 1995. McMichael then served as the Sergeant Major of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing from 1997 to 1999, and then the Sergeant Major for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Division at the U.S.M.C. Headquarters. On July 1, 1999, McMichael was named 14th Sergeant Major of the

Marine Corps, becoming the first African American to hold the post. Under his leadership, the Marine Corps saw the establishment of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program and the commencement of the Global War on Terrorism. Deferring his planned retirement in 2003, McMichael was appointed to the newly-created post of Senior Non-Commissioned Officer for Allied Command Operations, and served in there until July 17, 2006.

McMichael's military honors include the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy & Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal. His memoirs were published under the title *Leadership: Achieving Life-Changing Success From Within* (2008).

U.S. Marine Corps Sargent Major Alford L. McMichael was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on May 22, 2013.

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