

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gen. Vincent Patton, III

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Patton, Vincent W.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III,
Dates:	May 25, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	11 uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:18:05).
Abstract:	Master chief petty officer Vincent Patton, III (1954 -) became the first African American selected as the service's senior-most enlisted ranking position as the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard in 1998. Patton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 25, 2013, in Fairfax, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_146
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Master chief petty officer Vincent Patton III was born on November 21, 1954 in Detroit, Michigan. Patton attended Cass Technical High School where he became an Eagle Scout and joined U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps (NSCC) James M. Hannan Division before graduating in 1972. Patton earned all of his college education while on active duty. He received his B.A. degree in communications from Pacific College Angwin, California in 1976 and his B.S. degree in social work from Shaw College in Detroit, Michigan. After graduating from Loyola University in 1979 with his M.A. degree in counseling psychology, Patton earned his doctorate in

education degree from American University in Washington, D.C. in 1984. Patton's advanced military education includes the U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer Academy, the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy (with distinction), and the Department of Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.

In 1973, Patton graduated from U.S. Coast Guard Radioman (communications) School and was assigned duty on board the USCGC *DALLAS* at Governors Island, New York. He also served as a radioman at the Coast Guard Group and Air Station in Detroit, Michigan and as a recruiter at the Coast Guard Recruiting Office, Chicago. In 1979, Patton changed his occupational rating from radioman to yeoman (personnel) and was assigned to the Ninth Coast Guard District Office in Cleveland, Ohio. He attended American University as the first enlisted member selected for graduate school where he earned his doctorate degree and wrote his dissertation on developing the Coast Guard Enlisted Performance Evaluation Program. After graduate school he served onboard USCGC *BOUTWELL* homeported at Seattle, Washington and later returned to Coast Guard Headquarters to become the first Coast Guard enlisted training manager. Following this assignment, Patton became the Command Master Chief for the Coast Guard Atlantic Area, based at Governors Island, New York where he was the senior enlisted advisor to Joint Task Force-160 deployed to Haiti and Guantanamo Bay Cuba during Operation Support Democracy.

Patton served as the 8th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard from 1998 to 2002. He was the first African American to reach that rank in the U.S. Coast Guard. As the service's highest ranking enlisted member, he served as the principal advisor to the Commandant of the Coast Guard, his directorates, the U.S. Secretaries of Transportation and Defense and the Commander-in-Chief. In 2002, Patton retired from the U.S. Coast Guard after thirty years of active service. He became an assistant professor at University of California Berkeley before working for Monster Worldwide as director of Government Partnerships and Alliances. Patton was later named vice president for Homeland Security Programs at AFCEA International.

Patton's military honors include the Distinguished Service Medal; two Meritorious Service Medals, three Coast Guard Commendation Medals, three Coast Guard Achievement Medals, the Commandant's Letter of Commendation Ribbon, eight Meritorious Team Awards, and eight Coast Guard Good Conduct Awards. He also has earned the Cutterman's Insignia and the Parachutist Jump Wings Badge.

8th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Vincent W. Patton III was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 25, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 25, 2013, in Fairfax, Virginia, and was recorded on 11 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Master chief petty officer Vincent Patton, III (1954 -) became the first African American selected as the service's senior-most enlisted ranking position as the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard in 1998.

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:

Patton, Vincent W.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Patton, Vincent W.--Interviews

United States--Armed Forces--African American Officers--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Coast Guard.

Occupations:

Master Chief Petty 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 Gen. Vincent Patton, III, May 25, 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 2/5/2020 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 Gen. Vincent Patton, III, Section A2013_146_001_001, TRT: 1:28:49 2013/05/25

Vince Patton describes his family background. His mother, Elizabeth Mary Ellington Patton, was born on October 22, 1922 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Her family moved to Detroit, Michigan in the late 1920s, where her father, Edward Ellington, was killed because of his involvement with “running numbers.” She attended Hunter College’s nursing school in New York, where she met Patton’s father, Thomas Carter Patton, in 1944. Patton’s father was

born in Wheeling, West Virginia. He joined the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and worked to build combat roads in World War II. Patton explains that his paternal great grandfather, Vincent William Patton was a runaway slave; taken in by a family in Lawrence, Massachusetts, when he was a child. His great grandfather worked on the railroads in western Pennsylvania as an adult and his son continued his father's trade. Patton's grandfather married a mulatto woman named Catherine, whom he met in Youngstown, Pennsylvania. Patton also talks about his oldest brother, Gregory.

African American families.

African American mothers--Tennessee.

African American fathers--West Virginia.

African American grandparents.

World War, 1939-1945.

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III, Section A2013_146_001_002, TRT: 2:28:35 2013/05/25

Vincent Patton describes his siblings and his earliest childhood memory. After going to his first Detroit Tigers game at the age of seven, he would often "play out" the ballgame in his backyard. His brothers and sisters used to make fun of his imaginary play, which he admits he did until high school. However, he explains that using his imagination also helped him become a good student in school. Patton describes the neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan that he grew up in. The neighborhood's name had changed over the years but in the early 1920s when his mother grew up there, it was called Black Bottom. When Patton lived there, it was called North End and it had a diverse population of blacks, Poles and Jews.

Childhood--Michigan--Detroit.

Detroit (Mich.)--Social life and customs.

Black Bottom (Detroit, Mich.)

Detroit Tigers (Baseball team)

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III, Section A2013_146_001_003, TRT: 3:30:21 2013/05/25

Vincent Patton describes the sights, sounds and smells of growing up in Detroit, Michigan. Patton attended

Breitmeyer Elementary School, a couple of blocks from where he lived. He explains that many of his teachers at Breitmeyer also taught his brothers and sisters, as well as his mother. He was in the Boy Scouts from 1964, until he graduated high school. He remembers being at Boy Scout camp in Brighton, Michigan when the Detroit riots took place in 1967. Although his immediate neighborhood was fine when he got home, he recalls that two or three blocks away, it looked like a war zone. Patton attended Sherrard Junior High School and Cass Technical High School. Famous alumni from the high school include Lily Tomlin, David Allen Grier and Diana Ross. Patton talks about the people who influenced him in high school and his teacher, Ms. Musson. She helped Patton stay on track with his schoolwork when a case pneumonia almost prevented him from completing the eleventh grade.

Childhood--Michigan--Detroit.

Education--Michigan--Detroit.

Boy Scouts of America.

Riots--Michigan--Detroit--20th century.

Mentoring in education.

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III, Section A2013_146_001_004, TRT: 4:29:44 2013/05/25

Vincent Patton talks about his maternal grandmother, Frances Ellington's involvement with the civil rights movement in Detroit, Michigan. She participated in demonstrations, marches and even took part in one of the S.S. Kresge drugstore pickets. Additionally, Patton and his siblings attended the March on Washington with their grandmother in 1963. During high school, Patton got a part-time job working for a jazz radio station. He learned about jazz music from his older brother, Gregory. Patton talks about the notable musicians from his high school, such as Donald Byrd and Kevin Tony. Patton graduated from Cass Technical High School in 1972 and received the top junior ROTC honor student award. He explains how after a long standing interest in joining the U.S. Navy, he joined the U.S. Coast Guard instead.

African American grandmothers--Michigan.

Civil rights movements--Michigan--Detroit.

Radio broadcasting--United States.

Education, Secondary--Michigan.

United States. Coast Guard.

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III, Section
A2013_146_001_005, TRT: 5:31:03 2013/05/25

Vincent Patton explains what drew him to joining the U.S. Coast Guard. Patton also describes his parents' reaction to him joining the Coast Guard instead of the Navy. His father was disappointed because he was concerned about the racism his son would encounter in the Coast Guard. However, Patton's mother encouraged her son in his decision. When Patton entered the Coast Guard in 1972, he was interested in becoming a master chief petty officer. After twelve weeks of basic training, Patton went to radio school in Petaluma, California where he studied to be a ship board radio operator. He describes his first assignment in the U.S. Coast Guard aboard the "Dallas" and explains how his unit's medical evacuation of a Soviet spy vessel led to a personal commendation.

United States. Coast Guard.

College choice--United States.

Discrimination in employment--United States.

Dallas (Ship : WHEC-716)

Espionage, Soviet--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III, Section
A2013_146_001_006, TRT: 6:32:50 2013/05/25

Vince Patton describes the difficult time he had with a racist chief in the U.S. Coast Guard. When he began taking college courses in the Coast Guard, it made Chief Wood very upset. However, Patton did not let Chief Wood's racist behavior deter him from his studies--and many years later, after Patton made senior chief, Chief Wood contacted Patton to say he was sorry for the way he had treated him. Patton obtained two degrees while in the U.S. Coast Guard. He received his B.A. degree in communications from Pacific College in Angwin, California and his B.S. degree in social work from Shaw College in Detroit, Michigan. Patton explains how he

became good friends with African American writer, Alex Haley, after meeting Haley at a recruiting event in Chicago, Illinois. While fulfilling his recruiting duties in Chicago, Patton also earned his M.A. degree in counseling psychology from Loyola University in 1979.

United States. Coast Guard--African Americans.

Discrimination in employment--United States.

Pacific College (Fresno, Calif.)

Shaw College.

Haley, Alex.

Loyola University of Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III, Section A2013_146_001_007, TRT: 7:31:07 2013/05/25

Vincent Patton talks about developing an enrichment program for the U.S. Coast Guard from his graduate thesis at Loyola University. In 1980, Patton was assigned to the Ninth Coast Guard District in Cleveland, Ohio where he was asked by Admiral James S. Gracey to assist with changing the U.S. Coast Guard's enlisted evaluation system. Subsequently, Patton was sent to American University in Washington, D.C. where he earned his doctorate degree and wrote a dissertation on developing a new enlisted evaluation system. The system was implemented into the Coast Guard in 1985 and is still in existence. Patton recalls the pressure he received about becoming an officer in the U.S. Coast Guard--after graduating from school. However, he decided to remain in the Coast Guard as an enlisted person and was assigned to the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Boutwell homeported in Seattle, Washington.

United States. Coast Guard.

Loyola University of Chicago.

American University (Washington, D.C.)

United States. Coast Guard--Recruiting, enlistment, etc.

Government vessels--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III, Section A2013_146_001_008, TRT: 8:29:09 2013/05/25

Vincent Patton describes the Boutwell's main activities

and the important drug interdiction its crew members made in 1988. The interdiction was the largest of its kind in the Pacific at that time. Moreover, the millions of dollars in illegal drugs found on the vessel served as evidence for the conviction of former Panamanian dictator, Manuel Noriega. When Patton ended his tour of duty aboard the Boutwell in 1988, he was promoted to senior chief and went back to Washington, D.C. to work in a training management position. In 1992, Patton attended the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy in El Paso, Texas. Patton discusses his involvement with Operation Support Democracy and his promotion to Command Master Chief for the Atlantic area. In 1998, Patton was selected as 8th Master Chief of the U.S. Coast Guard. Additionally, during the Clinton Administration he was assigned to a taskforce created to address the issue of gays in the military.

United States. Coast Guard.

Seizure of vessels and cargoes.

Drug control--United States.

United States--Armed Forces--African American officers.

United States. Coast Guard--Appointments, promotions, salaries, etc.

Clinton, Bill, 1946-

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III, Section A2013_146_001_009, TRT: 9:29:54 2013/05/25

Vince Patton served as the 8th Master Chief Petty Officer of the U.S. Coast Guard from 1998 to 2002. Patton was the first African American to reach that rank in the Coast Guard and he served as the principal advisor to the Commandant of the Coast Guard, his directorates, the U.S. Secretaries of Transportation and Defense and the Commander-in-Chief. Patton reflects on his career accomplishments and talks about the U.S. Coast Guard's assistance with clean-up after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. In 2002, Patton retired from the U.S. Coast Guard after thirty years of active service. He became an assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley before working for Monster Worldwide, Inc. as director of Government Partnerships

and Alliances. Patton also talks about working part-time as executive director for Haley's Comet Foundation.

United States--Armed Forces--African American officers.

United States. Coast Guard--Petty officers.

September 11 Terrorist Attacks, 2001.

University of California, Berkeley.

African American executives.

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III, Section A2013_146_001_010, TRT: 10:29:42 2013/05/25

Vincent Patton talks about working together with Monster Worldwide, Inc. to help transitioning military personnel find jobs. Additionally, Patton discusses his role as vice president of Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association's (APCEA) Homeland Security department. Patton discusses volunteering in Haiti after the 2011 earthquake. He also talks about his community service ministry, which performs outreach to underprivileged areas in both the U.S. and overseas. Patton comments on his retirement goals and talks about his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He defines his legacy with, what he calls, the three P's: people, passion and performance. Finally, Patton talks about his son from his first marriage and his daughter from his second marriage.

Veterans--Employment.

Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (U.S.)

Haiti--Social conditions.

Reminiscing.

African American families.

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Patton, III, Section A2013_146_001_011, TRT: 11:16:51 2013/05/25

Vincent Patton discusses how he would like to be remembered and describes his photographs.

Reminiscing.

Photographs.