

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Blount, Alvin V., 1922-2017
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr.,
Dates:	May 5, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:17:14).
Abstract:	Physician Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr. (1922 - 2017) , the first African American in North Carolina to be certified by the American College of Abdominal Surgeons, was a litigant in the hospital desegregation suit Simkins v. Moses H. Cone Hospital, which allowed him to become first black surgeon admitted to the medical staff of Cone Hospital. He served as acting Chief of Surgery for the 8225th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) Unit in Korea from 1951 until 1952, and was appointed Chief of Surgery for the 47th U.S. Army Combat Surgical Hospital in Southeast Asia. Blount was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 5, 2013, in Greensboro, North Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_157
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Physician Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr. was born on February 24, 1922, in Wake County, Raleigh, North Carolina. He was the eldest of four children and the only son of

parents who worked as domestics. After graduating from Washington High School in Raleigh, Blount enrolled at North Carolina A & T University in 1939 where he served as the student body president and as chairman of the campus newspaper before graduating in 1943 with his B.A. degree in chemistry (magna cum laude). After graduating, Blount was accepted into a government funded program that enabled him to enroll in Howard University Medical School where he studied under Dr. Charles Drew and received his M.D. degree in 1947. Blount spent three years on active duty in the U.S. Army during medical school. He completed a general surgery residency at Kate Bittings Reynolds Memorial Hospital in Winston-Salem.

In 1952, Blount was mobilized with the 8225th Infantry Division from Fort Bragg as a member of the U.S. Army Medical Corps' 2nd Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) Unit that was sent to Korea. Blount, whose team performed ninety surgeries a week, went on to become a captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps. He served as acting Chief of Surgery for the 8225th MASH Unit in Korea from 1951 until 1952, and was appointed Chief of Surgery for the 47th U.S. Army Combat Surgical Hospital in Southeast Asia. He returned to the United States in 1954.

In 1957, Blount became the first African American in North Carolina to be certified by the American College of Abdominal Surgeons in 1957 and practiced at Kindred Hospital (formerly L. Richardson Hospital). He was a litigant of the suit *Simkins v. Moses H. Cone Hospital* (1963), the landmark Supreme Court decision that desegregated hospitals throughout the South. Blount became the first black surgeon admitted to the medical staff of Cone Hospital in 1964. He served as Chief of Surgery for L. Richardson Hospital and as Medical Director for the Guilford Health Care Center.

Blount was affiliated with numerous organizations including Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Association of Guardsmen. He was a member of the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity since 1970; and, in 1979, he established the Beta Epsilon Boule of the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity in Greensboro. Blount, a 33rd degree Mason, was an honorary past Grand Master and Medical Director of the Prince Hall Masons of North Carolina. He received countless awards including the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, the highest honor that can be granted to a civilian in the state of North Carolina. In 1983, North Carolina A & T University awarded Blount an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities

Blount passed away on January 6, 2017 at age 94.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 5, 2013, in Greensboro, North Carolina, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Physician Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr. (1922 - 2017), the first African American in North Carolina to be certified by the American College of Abdominal Surgeons, was a litigant in the hospital desegregation suit *Simkins v. Moses H. Cone Hospital*, which allowed him to become first black surgeon admitted to the medical staff of Cone Hospital. He served as acting Chief of Surgery for the 8225th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) Unit in Korea from 1951 until 1952, and was appointed Chief of Surgery for the 47th U.S. Army Combat Surgical Hospital in Southeast Asia.

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:

Blount, Alvin V., 1922-2017

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Blount, Alvin V., 1922-2017--Interviews

African American surgeons--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. Army

Occupations:

Physician

HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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 Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr., May 5, 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 Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr., Section A2013_157_001_001, TRT: 1:29:18 2013/05/05

Alvin Blount describes his family's history. Blount's mother, Annie Lee Kornegy Blount, was born in November, 1898, in Franklin County, North Carolina. She attended Albion Academy and Blount described her as

wanting to to become a teacher. Blount's father, Alvin Blount, Sr., was born in Wake County, North Carolina, in November, 1900, on family-owned land.hhhhhhhh Blount discusses land ownership in North Carolina following the American Civil War, and his parental family's land. Blount's parents met and married in 1920 in North Carolina, where his father worked at White's Ice Cream Company in Raleigh. He talks about his parents' loving marriage, their migration to New Rochelle, New York in 1928 during the Great Depression, and his father's employment as a chauffeur for Eddie Rickenbacker. Blount discusses the Rickenbacker family, General Pershing, and the mentorship that he received from his father's next employer, Reed Chambers.

African American families.

African American mothers--North Carolina.

African American fathers--North Carolina.

Landowners--North Carolina.

Migration, Internal--United States

Depressions--1929--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr., Section
A2013_157_001_002, TRT: 2:29:49 2013/05/05

Alvin Blount's parents temporarily migrated from North Carolina to New Rochelle, New York in 1928, to find employment during the Great Depression. Blount describes his childhood during the Depression and his observations of the discrimination faced by African Americans in the southern United States. He began school in 1928 at Lincoln Elementary School in New Rochelle, and later attended B.F. Person Elementary School in Franklinton, North Carolina. Blount talks about his teachers, the differences between his two elementary schools, and his academics and leadership activities. In 1939, he began his undergraduate studies at North Carolina A and T State University on a National Youth Administration (NYA) scholarship. He explains his interest in majoring in chemistry, talks about his professors and his involvement in campus politics. Blount also discusses his religious faith, his mentor, Reed Chambers, his exposure to black doctors while growing

up, his mother's death, and his father's remarriage.

Depressions--1929--United States.

Migration, Internal--United States.

Education--New York (State).

Education--North Carolina.

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.

Mentoring.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr., Section
A2013_157_001_003, TRT: 3:30:11 2013/05/05

From 1939 to 1943, Alvin Blount attended North Carolina A and T State University, where he earned his B.S. degree in chemistry and math. Blount describes his experience in college, his involvement in student politics and his nickname of "Little Caesar." When the U.S. entered World War II in 1941, Blount decided to pursue medicine, to gain a deferment from the draft. After graduating from college in 1943, Blount joined the U.S. Army, but was not deployed to the war. In 1947, he began medical school at Howard University. Blount describes his experience and talks about his professors and colleagues at Howard, the Flexner Report, and the discrimination experienced by black residents and physicians during his training. He also emphasizes the importance of a background in the humanities, how he ensured that he received a well-rounded education, and his career as a physician.

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.

World War, 1939-1945.

Howard University.

Medical education--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr., Section
A2013_157_001_004, TRT: 4:28:42 2013/05/05

After graduating from Howard University's medical school, Alvin Blount interned and did his residency at Kate B. Reynolds Hospital in Winston-Salem, North Carolina from 1947 to 1950. Blount then rejoined the U.S. Army, and was stationed as a civilian surgeon in Fort

Bragg, North Carolina, for a few months, before being assigned to a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) unit in the Korean War. In this section of the interview, Blount describes his experience in Korea and reflects upon the plight of the civilians there. He also discusses the book and television series, 'MASH', as well as his two marriages.

Howard University.

Medical education--United States.

Hospitals--North Carolina.

Fort Bragg (N.C.).

Korean War, 1950-1953.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr., Section A2013_157_001_005, TRT: 5:30:32 2013/05/05

After returning from his service in the Korean War in 1952, Alvin Blount began to practice medicine in Greensboro, North Carolina. Blount was one of ten petitioners on the 'Simkins versus Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital' lawsuit of 1963, and he describes the details of the case and its landmark decision. Blount also talks about Jack Greenburg, the lawyer for their suit, and the only white legal counselor for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF), and the first black doctor to practice at Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital. He discusses his acquaintance with Thurgood Marshall, his experience with demonstrations while he was a student at North Carolina A and T State University, his impressions of Reverend Jesse Jackson, the involvement of black physicians in the Civil Rights Movement, and the history of African Americans in medicine in Greensboro.

Hospitals--North Carolina.

African American surgeons--North Carolina.

Trials.

Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993.

Jackson, Jesse, 1941-

Civil rights movements--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr., Section A2013_157_001_006, TRT: 6:31:03 2013/05/05

In 1964, Alvin Blount became the first African American surgeon to operate at Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital in Greensboro, North Carolina. He describes his experience there, talks about his practice in Greensboro, his relationship with the Ku Klux Klansmen who built his home, and the discrimination that he faced as a black physician. Blount also talks about the changes over time in the relationship between African American and white doctors in North Carolina, and serving on the Greensboro jury commission. In this section of the interview, he also reflects upon his career and legacy, discusses the election of President Barack Obama as the first black president of the United States, and talks about his family.

African American surgeons--North Carolina.

Ku Klux Klan (1915-)--North Carolina.

Race relations--North Carolina.

Reminiscing.

Obama, Barack.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Alvin Blount, Jr., Section
A2013_157_001_007, TRT: 7:17:39 2013/05/05

In this section of the interview, Alvin Blount discusses health concerns and healthcare for the African American community as well as medical malpractice. He talks about how he would like to be remembered, and closes the interview by describing his photographs.

Health care policy in the United States.

Reminiscing.

Photographs.