

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Brooks, Leo A., 1957-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr.,
Dates:	July 23, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	11 uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:12:24).
Abstract:	Brigadier general Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr. (1957 -) graduated from the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point and served in several command assignments; including as the Commander of airborne brigades in the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions; the Deputy Commanding General of the 1st Armored Division in Germany; and, the Commandant of Cadets at the USMA. Brooks was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 23, 2013, in Arlington, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_168
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Brigadier General (Ret.) Leo A. Brooks, Jr. was born on August 15, 1957 in Anchorage, Alaska. His father, Leo A. Brooks, Sr., was an Army Brigadier General; his mother, Naomi, was a schoolteacher. Brooks' younger brother, Vincent K. Brooks, served as a Four Star General in the U.S. Army; his sister, Marquita, a lawyer. After graduating from Jesuit high school in Sacramento, California in 1975, Brooks enrolled in the United States Military Academy at

West Point and received his B.S. degree in engineering in 1979.

Brooks began his military career with the 101st Airborne Division, and served in developmental positions from platoon leader to infantry company commander. From 1984 to 1988, Brooks was assigned to the 1st Battalion 75th Infantry Ranger Regiment as a logistics officer and then as Commander of A Company. He was then deployed to Korea where he served on the Joint Staff of the Combined Forces Command. While there he earned his M.A. degree in public administration from the University of Oklahoma in 1990. In 1992, Brooks completed the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

Brooks then reported to Fort Bragg, North Carolina for duty with the 82nd Airborne Division where he was assigned as executive officer in the 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment and then became deputy operations officer of the Division. He was subsequently selected to serve as aide-de-camp to the Chief of Staff of the United States Army from 1993-1995. Brooks returned to the 82nd Airborne Division and was named Commander of the 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, followed by a key staff assignment as Chief of Operations for the XVIII Airborne Corps. He completed the U.S. Army War College in 1999 and returned a third time to the 82nd Airborne Division and assumed command of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. Following command, he was selected for Brigadier General and deployed to Europe as Deputy Commanding General of the 1st Armored Division in 2001. In 2002, Brooks was appointed the 68th Commandant of Cadets at West Point. Brooks then reported to the Office of the Chief of Staff at the Pentagon where he served as Vice Director of Army Staff until retiring in 2006. He went on to become Vice President of National Security & Space Group for the Boeing Company in Washington, D.C.

Brooks was a senior fellow from the Maxwell School of Government at Syracuse University; and has an honorary law degree from the New England School of Law, Boston. His military awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with Two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Meritorious Service medal with Four Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal with Two Oak Leaf Clusters, the National Defense Medal and Bronze Star, the War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Multinational Force and Observers Medal and the Korea Defense Service Medal.

U.S. Army Brigadier General (Ret.) Leo A. Brooks, Jr. was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 23, 2013

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 23, 2013, in Arlington, Virginia, and was recorded on 11 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Brigadier general Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr. (1957 -) graduated from the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point and served in several command assignments; including as the Commander of airborne brigades in the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions; the Deputy Commanding General of the 1st Armored Division in Germany; and, the Commandant of Cadets at the USMA.

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:

Brooks, Leo A., 1957-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brooks, Leo A., 1957---Interviews

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

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Brigadier General

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 Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., July 23, 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 Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., Section A2013_168_001_001, TRT: 1:28:35 2013/07/23

Leo Brooks, Jr. describes his family's history. Brooks' mother, Naomi Lewis Brooks, was born in April of 1934, in Alexandria, Virginia, and belonged to the long lineage of the Quander family that originated in Ghana. Skilled as an athlete, she graduated from Parker Gray High School in Alexandria, majored in education at Virginia State College, and established a career as a elementary school teacher. Brooks' father, Leo Brooks, Sr., was born in August of 1932, in Washington, D.C. He was raised in Del Ray, Virginia, where he pursued his interest in music.

Brooks, Sr. also attended Virginia State College, where he majored in music. Brooks' parents met in high school, began dating in college, and married after his mother graduated around 1955. Brooks also talks about his grandparents on both sides of his family, his paternal great-grandfather, "Pap," who was a vaudevillian, his family's interest in music, and their focus on education.

African American families.

African American mothers--Virginia.

African American fathers--Washington (D.C.).

Virginia State College.

African American grandparents.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., Section A2013_168_001_002, TRT: 2:29:04 2013/07/23

Leo Brooks, Jr. was born in Anchorage, Alaska, while his father was stationed there in the U.S. Army. Brooks and his siblings grew up in Xenia, Ohio, Arlington and Bryn Mawr Park, Virginia, Baltimore, Maryland, and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He describes his childhood in Xenia, where he began preschool, in Arlington while his father was in Vietnam, and the integrated military environment in Fort Leavenworth while his father attended Command and General Staff College. Brooks recalls President John F. Kennedy's funeral and the aftermath of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination. He also talks about his father's retirement from the Army, his maternal uncle, Jimmy Lewis, who was a basketball player and coach, and his family's induction into the Alexandria African American Hall of Fame.

Childhood--Ohio.

Families of military personnel--United States.

Fort Leavenworth (Kan.)

Assassination--United States--History--20th century.

African American families--Virginia--Alexandria.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., Section A2013_168_001_003, TRT: 3:29:23 2013/07/23

Leo Brooks, Jr. spent a large part of his childhood in Northern Virginia, where he was able to spend time with

his close-knit extended family. He attended Bryn Mawr Elementary School and Thomas Jefferson High School, where he was a mischievous student until his teacher Ms. Adeline Waters influenced him. Brooks played football and participated in track in school. He describes his passion for football as a running back. Brooks and his family moved to Sacramento, California during his senior year, where he attended Jesuit High School, and played in the position of an outside linebacker. He talks about his family's support of his athletic endeavors, and the influence of his coaches.

Childhood--Virginia.

Education--Virginia.

Mentoring in education.

High school athletes.

Jesuits--Education--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., Section A2013_168_001_004, TRT: 4:29:09 2013/07/23

In 1975, Leo Brooks, Jr. graduated from Jesuit High School in Sacramento, California as an honor student. Brooks excelled as a football player and won the 'Iron Man Award'. He talked about his desire to play football in college, and his decision to attend the United States Military Academy. He also discussed his academics in high school, his trip to West Point, being counseled by his paternal uncle, and the challenges that he faced as a freshman and an African American student there. Brooks sought comfort in his faith and the church community, and was mentored by Chaplain Richard Camp, the associate pastor of the Corps of Cadets. He joined the track team at West Point, and talks about the bond between the athletes. Brooks proved his leadership skills during his first summer at Camp Buckner at the end of his freshman year.

Jesuits--Education--United States.

High school athletes--California.

Military education--New York (State)--West Point.

College choice--United States.

College athletes.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., Section

A2013_168_001_005, TRT: 5:30:35 2013/07/23

Leo Brooks, Jr. began his studies at the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1975. He describes his freshman year there and the Borman Commission's investigation of honor code violations by cadets. The same year, women were admitted to West Point for the first time. By his sophomore year, Brooks had become accustomed to his environment, participated in track athletics, and played on the varsity rugby team. During the summer between his sophomore and junior years, he attended the U.S. Army Ranger School as well as the U.S. Army Airborne School. Brooks describes his academic, leadership and athletic successes at West Point, where he was appointed as a regimental commander by his senior year. He graduated in 1979 with his B.A. degree in mechanical engineering. Brooks also talks about his brother joining him at West Point, his close friend, Lloyd Darlington, who graduated with him, and his West Point surrogate mother, Bobby Pollock.

Military education--New York (State)--West Point.

College athletes.

African American families.

Mentoring in education.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., Section
A2013_168_001_006, TRT: 6:29:07 2013/07/23

Leo Brooks, Jr. graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1979, and was assigned to 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. Army. From 1979 to 1981, he served as a rifle platoon leader in B Company and later as an anti-tank platoon leader in the Combat Support Company, 1st Battalion, 503th Infantry at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. He also attended Air Assault School, and was recognized as the Distinguished Honor Graduate. Brooks describes his disciplinary philosophy as a platoon leader, the challenges faced by the Army in the 1970s, and its turnaround in the 1980s. From 1981 to 1982, he was appointed as the aide-de-camp to the assistant division commander of operations. He then served as the commander of C Company in the 3rd Battalion, 327th Infantry, at Fort Campbell. In 1984, Brooks was promoted

to the rank of captain. He attended the Infantry Officer Advanced Course at Fort Benning, Georgia and the U.S. Army Jumpmaster School, prior to his assignment to the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.

United States. Army Air Forces.

Fort Campbell (Ky. and Tenn.)

Leadership.

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

Fort Benning (Ga.)

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., Section A2013_168_001_007, TRT: 7:28:59 2013/07/23

From 1986 to 1988, Leo Brooks, Jr. served as the commander of Company A of the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment at Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia. He describes his experience there, and the lessons learned in the aftermath of a tragic incident during a rehearsal mission. From 1988 to 1991, Brooks served in Korea on the joint staff. He then attended the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, before serving in the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. In 1994, Brooks was selected as the aide-de-camp of the chief of staff of the U.S. Army, General Gordon R. Sullivan. He describes the mentorship he received from Sullivan. In 1995, he was appointed as the commander of the 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division. In this section of the interview, Brooks talks about his assignments, and the birth of his four daughters during his early years in the U.S. Army.

Hunter Army Airfield (Ga.)

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

Korea (South)

Fort Leavenworth (Kan.)

Fort Bragg (N.C.)

Sullivan, Gordon R., 1937-

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., Section A2013_168_001_008, TRT: 8:29:56 2013/07/23

In 1995, Leo Brooks, Jr. was promoted to lieutenant

colonel where he served as the commander of the 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg. In 1997, he became the chief of current operations for the 18th Airborne Corps. Brooks was selected to attend the Army War College in 1998, and promoted to become a colonel in 1999. The same year, he was appointed as the commander of the 1st Brigade, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. In 2001, Brooks became the assistant division commander (Maneuver) in the 1st Armored Division, 7th Army, Germany. He talks about the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the U.S. Army's missions in Afghanistan and Iraq soon after. In 2002, Brooks was appointed as the commandant of cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He describes his experience as well as the roles of the superintendent, dean and commandant at West Point. He also reflects upon opportunities for African Americans in the armed services. United States. Army--Promotions.

Fort Bragg (N.C.)

Army War College (U.S.)

September 11 Terrorist Attacks, 2001.

Iraq War, 2003-2011.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., Section A2013_168_001_009, TRT: 9:30:40 2013/07/23

From 2002 to 2003, Leo Brooks, Jr. served as the commandant of cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point. In this section of the interview, he describes the challenges faced at West Point while he served there, including the death of a student from a heat stroke, individual instances of racism, and issues related to sexual harassment. Brooks discusses international students, exchange students, the history of African American cadets and the highlight of his experience at West Point. He reflects upon the high ethical and moral standards of the military, challenging rules and regulations in the military, and his disciplinary philosophy about positions of command. Brooks also talks about his faith in the role of the Army Chaplain Corps.

United States Military Academy.

Military cadets--New York (State)--West Point.

Military ethics--United States.

Faith.

United States. Army. Chaplain Corps.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., Section
A2013_168_001_010, TRT: 10:29:47 2013/07/23

From 2004 to 2006, Leo Brooks, Jr. served as the vice director of the Pentagon Army staff alongside his brother, Vincent Brooks, who was the chief of Public Affairs. He describes the details of his service in this position, including his work with the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. Brooks retired from the U.S. Army in 2006, and accepted a position as the vice president of Army Systems at the Boeing Company. Brooks discusses his work with Apache Block III helicopters and his position at Boeing, as the vice president of the National Security and Space Group. He also shares his message to youth, reflects upon his life and career and talks about his four daughters.

Pentagon (Va.)

Abu Ghraib Prison.

Boeing Aerospace Company.

Reminiscing.

African American families.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, Jr., Section
A2013_168_001_011, TRT: 11:17:09 2013/07/23

In this closing section of the interview, Leo Brooks, Jr. reflects upon his legacy and how he would like to be remembered. He also talks about his youngest daughter, and importance of family support and faith in God. He ends his interview by describing his photographs.

Reminiscing.

Fathers and daughters.

Photographs.