

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gen. Vincent Brooks

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com   |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Brooks, Vincent Keith, 1958-   |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Brooks,  |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | June 21, 2013  |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2013   |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 3 uncompressed MOV digital video files (1:28:25).  |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | General Gen. Vincent Brooks (1958 - ) graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point where he became the first African American cadet in the school's history to be named cadet brigade commander. His family is the only African American family in U.S. history with three generals in two generations. Brooks currently commands U.S. Army Pacific. Brooks was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 21, 2013, in Sumter, South Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2013_171  |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.  |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

U.S. Army General Vincent K. Brooks was born in Anchorage, Alaska on October 24, 1958 to Leo Brooks Sr., an army officer who began his career one year after the military received the order to desegregate and ended his career nearly 30 years later having achieved the rank of major general, and Naomi Lewis Brooks, a schoolteacher and Army wife. Brooks graduated from Jesuit High School in California where he excelled in academics and in athletics, leading to his

appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point among the first class to include women. At West Point, Brooks played varsity basketball in his freshman year under Coach Mike Krzyzewski. Brooks went on to graduate with a B.S. degree in 1980 after achieving the historic honor of being appointed as the top-ranking cadet in the U.S. Corps of Cadets – the Cadet Brigade Commander or “First Captain” for his senior year – an historic first for an African American cadet, coming 177 years into West Point’s history, and also 102 years after the first African American – Henry O. Flipper – graduated. He went on to earn his master’s degree (Master of Military Art and Science – MMAS) from the prestigious School of Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth and later served as a National Security Fellow at the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Still serving on active duty thirty-three years after graduating from West Point as a commissioned officer, Brooks served in command and staff positions in the United States and around the world. His tours of duty with combat units include the 82nd Airborne Division, the 1st Infantry Division, the 2d Infantry Division, the 3d Infantry Division, the 1st Cavalry Division, the III Corps, Third Army/U.S. Army Central, U.S. Army Pacific, and U.S. Central Command. General Brooks has commanded forces in peacekeeping operations and armistice enforcement in Kosovo and Korea, respectively prior to becoming a general; and in combat on four different tours in Iraq, the Middle East and Central Asia, all as a general. Brooks served at the national-level in the Pentagon as aide-de-camp to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and, later, as the U.S. Army’s Chief of Public Affairs. He also served on The Joint Staff as Deputy Director for Political-Military Affairs for the Western Hemisphere, and later as the Deputy Director for the War on Terrorism. On July 2, 2013, he was appointed by President Obama to command the U.S. Army Pacific.

Brooks’ has many military honors and decorations with the highest being the Distinguished Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters. Brooks was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the New England School of Law in Boston and is part of the only African American family to have three generals within two generations (father, brother, and Vincent Brooks are all Army generals).

Brooks is married to his wife of thirty years, Carol, a physical therapist and educator who also comes from a career Army officer family.

U.S. Army General Vincent K. Brooks was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 20, 2013.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gen. Vincent Brooks was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 21, 2013, in Sumter, South Carolina, and was recorded on 3 uncompressed MOV digital video files. General Gen. Vincent Brooks (1958 - ) graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point where he became the first African American cadet in the school's history to be named cadet brigade commander. His family is the only African American family in U.S. history with three generals in two generations. Brooks currently commands U.S. Army Pacific.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

## **Persons:**

Brooks, Vincent Keith, 1958-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Brooks, Vincent Keith, 1958---Interviews

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

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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U.S. Army

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## **Occupations:**

General

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

MilitaryMakers

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## **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 Brooks, June 21, 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).

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## **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.

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## **Detailed Description of the Collection**

### **Series I: Original Interview Footage**

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Brooks, Section A2013\_171\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:43 2013/06/21

Vincent Brooks slates his interview and describes his maternal family's background. Brooks' mother, Naomi Lewis Brooks, was born in 1934, in Alexandria, Virginia. His maternal grandmother, Eunice Quander Lewis, traced her paternal Quander family lineage to the 1600s in northern Virginia. His maternal grandfather, James Lewis, Jr., traced his lineage to Loudoun County, and other parts of Virginia and Maryland. Brooks describes the details of

the Quander and Lewis family lineage. He also talks about his maternal grandfather, his employment as a chauffeur at United Mineworkers of America, and his family's involvement in the church and seminary in Alexandria, Virginia.

African American families.

African American mothers--Virginia.

African American grandparents--Virginia.

African american churches--Virginia.

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Brooks, Section A2013\_171\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:38 2013/06/21

Vincent Brooks describes his paternal family's background. Brooks' father, Leo Brooks, Sr., was born in 1932 in Alexandria, Virginia. Brooks' paternal grandfather, Houston George Brooks, Sr., was a Baptist minister and the pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Rockville, Maryland, from 1963 until his death around 1985. He talks about his grandfather's involvement as a community leader in Alexandria, his family's involvement in Alfred Street Baptist Church, his paternal family's entrepreneurship, segregation in Alexandria and the late integration of schools in the 1970s. Brooks' parents studied at Parker Gray High School in Alexandria, and then went on to attend Virginia State College (now University). He discusses his father's enrollment in the ROTC program, his aspirations for a career in music, and his paternal family's education and careers. Brooks also talks about his siblings, Leo Brooks, Jr. and Marquita Brooks, and his likeness to his parents.

African American families.

African American fathers--Virginia.

African American grandparents.

African American churches--Maryland.

Education--Virginia.

Virginia State University.

Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Vincent Brooks, Section A2013\_171\_001\_003, TRT: 3:31:04 2013/06/21

Vincent Brooks and his siblings, Leo Brooks, Jr. and

Marquita Brooks, were raised on U.S. Army installations as well as in the civilian sector. Brooks began school at Thomas Jefferson Elementary School in Baltimore, Maryland, where he was a victim of bullying. He describes the negative impact that bullying had on his self-esteem and self-confidence. He went on to study at Douglas McArthur Elementary School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and at Bryn Mawr Elementary School in Fairfax County, Virginia. Brooks experienced more integrated race relations on base than in the civilian society of the 1960s and 1970s. He discusses the similarities and differences between schools in the military and civilian sectors, and his interest in human anatomy and medicine in middle and high school. He also reflects upon his close relationship with his father, the male role models in his family, and the teachers who inspired him in school.

Education, Primary--United States.

Families of military personnel.

Bullying in schools.

Race relations--United States.

Mentoring.