

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bostick, Thomas P
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick,
Dates:	August 9, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:30:18).
Abstract:	Lieutenant general Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick (1956 -) was appointed as the 53rd Chief of Engineers and the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2012, making him only the second African American to serve in that position. Bostick was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 9, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_182
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

U.S. Army Lieutenant General Thomas P. Bostick was born on September 23, 1956 in Fukuoka, Japan. Bostick was raised in a family with a strong military background. His father was a retired U.S. Army Master Sergeant; his father-in-law, a U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Major; and his brother, a U.S. Army Colonel. Bostick graduated with his B.S. degree from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1978. He received his M.S. degree in civil engineering and his M.S. degree in mechanical engineering from Stanford University in 1985. Bostick's military education includes the U.S. Army Engineer School, the U.S. Army

Command and General Staff College, and the U.S. Army War College.

In 1978, Bostick was commissioned into the U.S. Army as a second lieutenant and was then assigned to the 54th Engineer Battalion in Wildflecken, Germany where he served in a variety of capacities until 1982. Upon returning to the United States, Bostick studied at the U.S. Army Engineer School and Stanford University before becoming an instructor of mechanical engineering at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1985. He was also a White House Fellow in 1989 and 1990, serving as a special assistant to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

In 1990, Bostick was assigned to the U.S. Army in Europe in Heidelberg, Germany, and then as an engineer operations staff officer in the First Armored Division in Baumholder and then again in Bad Kreuznach, Germany. He reported to Washington, D.C. in 1993 and served as the executive officer to the Chief of Engineers and then as battalion commander of the 1st Engineer Battalion. Bostick was deployed again from 1997 to 1999 and commanded the Engineer Brigade of the First Armored Division, which included participation in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1999, he was assigned as executive officer to the Chief of Staff of the Army, and served on the Joint Staff during the events of September 11, 2001 in the National Military Command Center. Bostick then deployed to Iraq as assistant division commander, 1st Cavalry Division, before serving as the Commanding General of the Gulf Region Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He later served as the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command Center at Fort Knox, Kentucky; and, in 2010, was named director of personnel for the Army in the Pentagon. On May 22, 2012, Bostick became the 53rd U.S. Army Chief of Engineers and Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, making him only the second African American to serve in that position.

Bostick's military honors and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Combat Action Badge, the Parachutist badge, the Recruiter Badge, and the Ranger Tab. Bostick is also authorized to wear the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Identification Badge and the Army Staff Identification Badge.

Bostick and his wife, Renee Bostick, live in Washington, D.C. They have one son, Joshua.

Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 9, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 9, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Lieutenant general Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick (1956 -) was appointed as the 53rd Chief of Engineers and the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2012, making him only the second African American to serve in that position.

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:

Bostick, Thomas P

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bostick, Thomas P--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:

Lieutenant 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 Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, August 9, 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 Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, Section A2013_182_001_001, TRT: 1:31:33 2013/08/09

Thomas Bostick describes his family background. Bostick's mother, Fumiko Mary Taira Bostick, was born on February 9, 1930 on the island of Kyushu, Japan. She had seven siblings and her father was a successful fisherman until he lost everything in World War II. Bostick's father, Sidney Christopher Bostick, was born on

August 28, 1930 in Brooklyn, New York. His paternal grandparents were Irene and James Bostick. His grandfather emigrated from Barbados to New York, where he worked as a handyman. Bostick's father lost both his parents by the age of eight; he and siblings had to be raised in foster homes. Bostick talks about how his parents met on Kyushu and describes their personalities. He also talks about how his five siblings and describes his earliest childhood memories.

African American families.

Japanese mothers.

African American fathers--New York (State)--New York.

Racially mixed people--United states.

Childhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, Section A2013_182_001_002, TRT: 2:32:02 2013/08/09

Thomas Bostick talks about his father's career in the U.S. Army. Bostick was nearly held back in the fifth grade and remembers how a letter from his father, who was in Vietnam, helped him want to be a better student. Bostick and his family lived in several places during his father's military service, including New York, Germany, Kansas, Japan, Louisiana and California. He recalls living with an uncle in Brooklyn when he was a child. He would later reconnect with this uncle, while attending the United States Military Academy at West Point. Bostick's father retired from the military before he began at West Point in order to help take care of his family. Bostick discusses his school experiences, recalls his favorite school teachers, talks about playing sports and remembers not being able to play football in junior high school because of a broken leg from a Boy Scout camping trip.

Children of military personnel--United States.

Childhood--New York (State).

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

Mentoring in education.

Video Oral History Interview with Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, Section A2013_182_001_003, TRT: 3:29:32 2013/08/09

Thomas Bostick talks about playing team sports in high

school. He was captain of the wrestling team, and played on the baseball and football team at Seaside High School in California. Bostick knew early on that he wanted to join the military after graduating from Seaside. He explains that his top two schools were the U.S. Air Force Academy and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Bostick needed a nomination from a local congressman or senator in order to apply to the academies, but was unable to obtain one. However, he did secure a nomination from President Richard Nixon and subsequently received appointments to both academies. Bostick shares why he decided to attend West Point instead of the U.S. Air Force Academy. He describes his initial arrival at West Point and talks about studying engineering at the Academy.

High school athletes.

Education, Secondary--California.

College choice--United States.

Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994.

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

Video Oral History Interview with Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, Section A2013_182_001_004, TRT: 4:27:58 2013/08/09

Thomas Bostick discusses what his father thought of him attending West Point and how his father helped prepare him for life at the Academy. In addition, he talks about his decision to join the U.S. Corps of Engineers instead of army infantry--like his dad. Bostick mentions his relationship with his own son and describes the differences between his and his wife's personalities. He recalls his reluctance towards going to ranger school at West Point, after being selected to work with the Brazilian Military Academy. Bostick describes how West Point's class of 1977 cheating scandal changed military training and education at the Academy. He also reflects on how the environment at West Point may have led to the scandal.

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

United States. Army. Corps of Engineers.

Marriage.

Education--Corrupt practices--New York (State)--West Point.

Thomas Bostick talks about the first black graduate of West Point, Henry O. Flipper. Bostick reflects on his experience as an African American engineer officer and speaks about the lack of African Americans in this field. He recalls his mentors in the Mechanics Department at West Point--a department he later taught in. Bostick talks about his decision to work as an engineer in the U.S. Army instead of the U.S. Army Infantry. He recalls the selection process for army infantry and engineers at West Point and the immense anxiety cadets felt while waiting to learn if they had received their desired branch of service. Bostick discusses his graduation from West Point in 1978 and the attendance of his mother and uncle. He then comments on attitudinal shifts in public support of the U.S. military, since World War II and the Vietnam War. Moreover, he discusses the importance of public support for the U.S. military.

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

Flipper, Henry Ossian, 1856-1940.

United States. Army. Corps of Engineers.

United States--Military policy--Public opinion.