

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lenon Lathan

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lathan, Lenon, 1926-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lenon Lathan,
Dates:	August 20, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:10:22).
Abstract:	Montford pointe marine Lenon Lathan (1926 - 2018) served in the Pacific Theater during World War II with the 243rd Marine Depot Company and the 25th Marching Depot Company. Lathan was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 20, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_191
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Montford Point Marine Lenon Lathan was born on July 19, 1926 in Sturgis, Mississippi. He was the tenth oldest twin of three sets of twins and fifteen other siblings born of Oscar Lathan and Mary Frazier. Lathan grew up in Sturgis and attended Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School in Mobile, Alabama where he played baseball and basketball as a young man. Lathan later enrolled in continuing education classes and studied Spanish at the City Colleges of Chicago. He is also a graduate of Washburn Trade School in Chicago where he later worked as a union pipefitter.

Lathan enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in Starkville, Mississippi in September of 1944 and as a private at DHIRS, Jackson, Mississippi. He trained at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina with the 43rd Marine Depot Company for one year and then was promoted to private first class (PFC) with the 25th Marching Depot Company. Lathan deployed to the Pacific Theater during World War II on board the *USS DOROTHEA*. He served under Second Lieutenant Kenneth I. Tuttle at Guam, Marianas Islands. In addition, he served aboard the *USS GENERAL W.C. MITCHELL* at Guam, Marianas Island. Lathan received an Honorable Discharge in 1948. In 1987, he retired from Local Union #597 Chicago Pipe Fitters and became an entrepreneur opening a bar and lounge on 12th Street & Wabash Avenue in Chicago, Illinois.

Lathan is a member of Grant Memorial A.M.E. Church, and has traveled to forty-eight of the fifty states and has visited five continents. As a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, the “Honor Flight Chicago” selected him to join other veterans on a trip to Washington, D.C. to see the WWII Memorial built in their honor.

Lathan was married to Mildred Barron for nearly fifty years before her passing in 1996. They had nine children, two of which preceded their mother in death. Together with his wife, Lathan raised his children in Chicago’s Lincoln Park area; and all seven children either graduated from private high schools or universities. He also has twelve grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Lathan passed away on January 27, 2018.

Montford Point Marine Lenon Lathan was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 20, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lenon Lathan was conducted by Denise Gines on August 20, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Montford pointe marine Lenon Lathan (1926 - 2018) served in the Pacific Theater during World War II with the 243rd Marine Depot Company and the 25th Marching Depot Company.

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:

Lathan, Lenon, 1926-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lathan, Lenon, 1926- --Interviews

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Montford Pointe Marine

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 Lenon Lathan, August 20, 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 5/30/2023 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 Lenon Lathan, Section A2013_191_001_001, TRT: 1:27:21 ?

Lenon Lathan describes his family's background. His mother, Mary Frazier, was born in December, 1900 in Germantown, Tennessee. Lathan describes his visits to his grandparents' home, where he recalls his grandmother, Emma Sanders' cooking, and fishing with his grandfather, Dave Frazier. Lathan's father, Oscar Lathan, was born in February, 1882, in Winston County, Mississippi, to Jacob Frazier and Emma Head. Lathan recalls his grandfather telling him about his paternal great-grandfather arriving in Virginia on a boat from Africa, and later moving to Mississippi, where he was able to purchase large amounts of land. Lathan discusses his siblings, his childhood on his family's farm, his decision to join the military, his relationship with his older brother, John, and with his twin brother, Clenon. Lathan also talks about his experience in elementary school at Liberty Hill Methodist Church, and then going to Gulfside Institute in Waveland, Mississippi and Dunbar High School in Mobile, Alabama.

African American families.

African American mothers--Tennessee.

African American fathers--Mississippi.

African American grandparents.

Landowners--Mississippi.

Education--Alabama.

Video Oral History Interview with Lenon Lathan, Section A2013_191_001_002, TRT: 2:26:31 ?

Lenon Lathan was raised in Sturgis, Mississippi, where he grew up under segregation. Lathan talks about his unpleasant childhood experiences with racism, his pact with his older brother, John, to leave Sturgis together, and his childhood desire to travel to big cities such as New York, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. Lathan attended high school at Gulfside Institute in Waveland, Mississippi, where his favorite subject was mathematics. He also was active in sports and drama in high school. Lathan then moved to Mobile, Alabama, to live with his favorite sister, Ceola, while attending Dunbar High School and working at a welding shipyard at night. Upon his return to Mississippi, Lathan was drafted into World War II as part of the U.S. Marine Corps. He describes his early experience in boot camp in North Carolina. He also describes his family's traditions, playing with his siblings, and his job observing the nesting habits of chickens and turkey.

Childhood--Mississippi.

Racism--Mississippi.

Education, Secondary--Mississippi.

World War, 1939-1945.

United States. Marine Corps.

Video Oral History Interview with Lenon Lathan, Section A2013_191_001_003, TRT: 3:28:16 ?

Lenon Lathan enlisted in and was inducted as a private in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1944. He attended basic training at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where he was an original member of the Montford Point Marines, the first African Americans to serve in the U.S. Marine Corps. Lathan talks about basic training at Montford Point and advanced training in San Diego, California. He discusses his deployment to the Pacific Theater aboard the USS Dorothea L. Dix to Guam, his service as a motor transport welder, and his experience there. After serving for eight months with the 54th Marine Battalion in Guam, Lathan returned to the U.S. and received an honorable discharge in 1948. He worked for a year at U.S. Steel, before a seventeen year stint with Campbell's Soup. In 1968, Lathan attended Washburn Trade School in Chicago, Illinois to become a licensed

pipefitter. He also talks about how he met and married his wife, Mildred Barron, his children, his platoon members and his thoughts about war.

United States. Marine Corps.

Montford Point Camp (Camp Lejeune, N.C.).

Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs.

Labor unions.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Lenon Lathan, Section A2013_191_001_004, TRT: 4:27:33 ?

Lenon Lathan was one of the original Montford Point Marines, the first African Americans to serve in the U.S. Marine Corps. He describes his experience in basic training camp at Montford Point, North Carolina in the 1940s, where he faced racism and segregation. In 1968, Lathan attended Washburn Trade School in Chicago, Illinois, and began a fifteen-year career as a licensed pipefitter with the Pipefitters Local Union 597. He describes his family's life in Chicago, where they bought a home in Lincoln Park. He also talks about his insistence that his children attend private schools, and their current professions. In 2012, Lathan and other members of the Montford Point Marines received the Congressional Gold Medal. He also explains his training in making dynamite bombs, and reflects upon the Vietnam War as well as the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and President John F. Kennedy.

African American business enterprises.

Bars (Drinking establishments)--Illinois--Chicago.

Cabrini-Green Homes (Chicago, Ill.).

Reminiscing.

Obama, Barack.

Video Oral History Interview with Lenon Lathan, Section A2013_191_001_005, TRT: 5:14:40 ?

In the 1980s, Lenon Lathan established a cocktail lounge in Chicago, Illinois, which he ran for six years. He describes his experience as a business-owner, and talks about losing his business when it burnt down. In the 1950s, Lathan lived in the Cabrini-Green public housing project in Chicago, before buying a home on the North Side. He describes his stay at the newly established Cabrini-Green housing facilities as a positive experience. In this closing section of the interview, Lathan reflects upon his life, shares a message encouraging youth to pursue educational opportunities, describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, and discusses President Barack Obama's election. He also shares how he would like to be remembered.

Photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Lenon Lathan, Section A2013_191_001_006, TRT: 6:06:01 ?

Lenon Lathan describes his photographs.