

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gen. Clara Adams-Ender

PERSON

Adams-Ender, Clara

Alternative Names: Gen. Clara Adams-Ender; Clara Mae Leach Adams-Ender

Life Dates: July 11, 1939-

Place of Birth: Willow Springs, North Carolina, USA

Residence: Woodbridge, VA

Work: Washington, D.C.

Occupations: Military Officer

Biographical Note

U.S. Army General Clara Mae Leach Adams-Ender was born on July 11, 1939 in Willow Springs, North Carolina to Caretha Bell Sapp Leach and Otha Leach. Adams-Ender was the fourth child of ten and grew up in a family of sharecroppers. Adams-Ender excelled in school and went on to North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, North Carolina, where she earned her B.S. degree in nursing in 1961.

Upon her graduation, Adams-Ender joined the U.S. Army Nurse Corps as a second lieutenant, received training at Brooke Army Medical Center in Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Adams-Ender was assigned overseas, beginning in 1963, as a staff nurse for the 121st evacuation hospital in the Pacific theater near North Korea; she would later serve in Germany. In 1964, Adams-Ender worked as a medical-surgical nursing instructor at Fort Sam Houston; in 1967, she became the first female officer to receive an Expert Medical Field Badge, whereupon she decided to return to school at the University of Minnesota.

After earning her M.S. degree from the University of Minnesota, Adams-Ender began working at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., initially as a medical-surgical nurse instructor, then as an assistant professor, until she was promoted to education coordinator in 1972. After two years as the assistant chief of the Department of Nursing at Fort Meade in Maryland, Adams-Ender entered the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; she graduated in 1976 as the first woman to earn a Master of Military Art and Science degree at the College. Adams-Ender graduated from the U.S. Army War College in

1982, the first African American Nurse Corps officer in the Army to do so.

After working as the Chief of the Department of Nursing in the 97th General Hospital, Chief of Nurse Recruiting at Fort Sheridan, and Illinois, Chief of the Department of Nursing at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Adams-Ender was promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General and became the Chief of the Army Nurse Corps in 1987. In 1991, Adams-Ender was selected to be Commanding General, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and served in this capacity as well as that of Deputy Commanding General of the U.S. Military District of Washington until her retirement in 1993.

Adams-Ender was known throughout her career for being active in nurse recruiting, initiating nursing units and advocating on behalf of critical care nurses for increased pay. Adams-Ender received a Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Legion of Merit award, an Arm Commendation Medal, and Meritorious Service Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters; she also received non-military awards that included the Roy Wilkins Meritorious Service Award of the NAACP, the Gertrude E. Rush Award for Leadership from the National Bar Association, and, in 1996, was named one of the 350 women who changed the world by Working Women magazine.

After retirement, Adams-Ender also served as the President of Caring About People With Enthusiasm (CAPE) Associates, Inc., and published her autobiography, *My Rise to the Stars: How a Sharecropper's Daughter Became an Army General*, in 2001.

Related Entries

North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of Minnesota [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Army Command and General Staff College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

U.S. Army Nurse Corps [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Caring About People With Enthusiasm (CAPE) Associates, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

President

Caring About People With Enthusiasm (CAPE) Associates, Inc. [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

President