

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Cornelius "Boots" Shepard

PERSON

Shepard, Cornelius, 1915-2007

**Alternative Names:** Cornelius "Boots" Shepard; Cornelius Orville Shepard;

**Life Dates:** July 11, 1915-November 17, 2007

**Place of Birth:** Sedalia, Missouri, USA

**Residence:** Lincoln, Nebraska

**Occupations:** Railroad Chef

## Biographical Note

Railroad chef Boots (Cornelius Orville) Shepard was born on July 11, 1915, in Sedalia, Missouri to Mabel Smith Shepard and Raymond Shepard. Shepard has traced his ancestors back to slavery and many of his relatives attended the now forgotten George R. Smith College, which was a popular Methodist institution named for Sedalia Missouri's founder and the college's benefactor. The school was a magnet for black people for miles around. Shepard was a very strong willed child; he received the nickname "Boots" when he refused to take off a pair of his new boots before going to bed. Shepard attended Franklin Elementary School and graduated from Lincoln High School in 1935.

While attending high school in the 1930s, Shepard met his future wife, Loreatha Mae. The couple raised eleven children and emphasized the values of family and hard work. In 1935 Shepard moved to Lincoln, Nebraska where he found a job as a cook on the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad (CB&Q). He worked for thirty-five years on the railroad and was the youngest chef at CB&Q Railroad during his tenure. This was a great accomplishment because African Americans were rarely promoted to the position of head chef on the railroads. As a chef, Shepard also traveled to Chicago where he worked on the California Zephyr. As a resident of Lincoln, Shepard joined the Newman Methodist Church and became an active member for seventy years.

Cornelius Orville Shepard died on November 17, 2007 at the age of 92.

Cornelius Orville Shepard was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 4, 2007.

## Related Entries

**Nebraska Wesleyan University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**C.C. Hubbard High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**High school diploma**

**Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad Company.** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1937 to 1970]

**chef**

**Newman Methodist Church** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**