

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Melvin J. Holley

PERSON

Holley, Melvin J., 1933-

Alternative Names: Melvin J. Holley;

Life Dates: January 27, 1933-

Place of Birth: Detroit, Michigan, USA

Residence: Lansing, Michigan

Occupations: Genealogist;

Biographical Note

Genealogist Melvin J. Holley was born on January 27, 1933 in Detroit, Michigan to Ethel Lee Jones Holley and Major Q. Holley and to a family of eight children. Holley attended Higginbotham Elementary School and then transferred to Post Intermediate Academy in 1945 before graduating from Cass Technical High School in 1951. Holley enrolled in Michigan State University and earned his B.A. degree in history in 1996.

In 1953, at the age of twenty, Holley was drafted into the United States Army. He attended the Army Radar School in Texas until 1954 when he was sent to England where he served his first tour of duty. In 1955, Holley returned to the United States and worked briefly for the Detroit Department of Street Railways. He joined the Michigan National Guard in October 1956 and served almost four decades as a military technician. Holley retired in 1991 with the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 4. Holley became interested in genealogy and started pursuing his own family history. In 2000, administrators at the Lansing Area African American Genealogy Society (LAAAGS) asked Holley to help build their organization into one of national prominence. He urged promotion of the preservation of African American family history and created a forum for sharing data. In addition, Holley hosted seminar discussions such as, "Getting Beyond Myself: An Introduction to African American Genealogy." He was elected president of the LAAAGS in 2006.

Holley is a member of the Religious Conference Management Association, United Conferences for Men and Greater Lansing Youth for Christ organizations. Holley lives in Lansing, Michigan and is married to Verna Holley. They have three adult children: Mark, Timothy and Millicent.

Melvin Julius Holley was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 29, 2008 and

October 23, 2012.

Related Entries

Cass Technical High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Higginbotham Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Michigan State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

bachelors

Loren Post Intermediate School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Detroit Department of Street Railways [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Michigan National Guard [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1956 to ?]

Earl Nelson Singers [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Lansing Area African American Genealogical Society [MEMBEROF]
[from 2000 to ?]

Founding Member