

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Holmes, Arthur, 1931-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr.,
Dates:	July 29, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:23:25).
Abstract:	Major general Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr. (1931 -) retired from the military as Commanding General, U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Command, where he oversaw the delivery of 30,000 tactical vehicles to the field with the highest level of user satisfaction yet achieved. He also served as Director of Go Montgomery!, a Department of Public Works and Transportation in Alabama. Holmes was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 29, 2008, in Olney, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_100
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

A long time military officer, Major General Arthur Holmes, Jr. served almost four decades in the United States Army, retiring as a Commanding General. A highly distinguished officer, he won several awards and decorations such as the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal and the Distinguished Service Medal.

Holmes began his military career as a member of a Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program in college. In June 1952, upon graduation, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Filling a variety of roles, Holmes served twice as a Maintenance Battalion Commander, the second in Vietnam; a member of the Guidance and Procedures Branch of the Logistics Directorate for the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Chief of Ordnance Branch of the Officer Personnel Directorate at the U.S Army Military Personnel Center before becoming Commander of the Division Support Command for the First Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Riley, Kansas; and subsequently served as Assistant Division Commander-Support for the same unit, the first Combat Service Support officer to fill the position. Holmes - then made history - becoming the first combat service support officer to serve as Executive Officer to the Secretary of the Army from 1977 until 1979. Holmes' final post - before retiring in 1987 - was that of Commanding General, U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Command, where he oversaw the delivery of 30,000 tactical vehicles to the field with the highest level of user satisfaction yet achieved. On behalf of his service to the U.S. Army, in 1991, Holmes became an Inductee in the 1999 Ordnance Corps Hall of Fame.

Arthur Holmes, Jr. was born on May 12, 1931 in Decatur, Alabama. He earned his B.S. degree in chemistry from the Hampton Institute – now called Hampton University, and his M.B.A degree from Kent State (Ohio) University. Holmes is also a graduate of the Naval War College. Moving on from the military, he became highly involved in business and governmental life serving for eight years as Vice-President of Logistics Applications and then

President and CEO of the Automated Sciences Group, Inc. - a high-tech corporation with 300 computer scientists and engineers and average annual revenue of \$28 million. Holmes also served a seven year stint with the Montgomery County Planning Board, serving as a commissioner, and then vice-chair and chairman. Between 2002 and 2004, he served as Director of Go Montgomery! – a Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) agency devoted to implementing the County’s Master Plan in all transportation regions. He took over the helm of DPWT, in October 2004.

Holmes is involved with many boards and organizations including Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. He and his wife, Wilma, have four children and six grandchildren, and they reside in Olney, Maryland.

Holmes was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 29, 2008.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 29, 2008, in Olney, Maryland, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Major general Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr. (1931 -) retired from the military as Commanding General, U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Command, where he oversaw the delivery of 30,000 tactical vehicles to the field with the highest level of user satisfaction yet achieved. He also served as Director of Go Montgomery!, a Department of Public Works and Transportation in Alabama.

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:

Holmes, Arthur, 1931-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Holmes, Arthur, 1931- --Interviews

African American generals--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Army.

Occupations:

Major 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 Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr., July 29, 2008. 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 Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr., Section A2008_100_001_001, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr. was born on May 12, 1931 in Decatur, Alabama to Grace Bradley Holmes and Arthur Holmes, Sr. His mother was born in Pulaski, Tennessee to Lorene Holt, who was of mixed race, and earned a living as a domestic worker. Holmes' paternal grandparents had Native American ancestry, and owned land in Huntsville, Alabama, where Holmes' father was born. Holmes' father went on to work for the Tennessee Valley Authority, while his mother served for eight years as the president of the Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society for the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Due to his father's work, Holmes' family moved frequently. They lived briefly in Sheffield, Alabama and Harriman, Tennessee; and eventually settled in Knoxville, Tennessee, where Holmes befriended Edward Hill, and attended Maynard Elementary School, Beardsley Junior High School and Austin High School. He was a member of the National Honor Society, and admired African American athletes like Joe Louis and Jackie Robinson.

Family--History.

Tennessee Valley Authority.

Segregation--Alabama.

Segregation--Tennessee.

Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr., Section A2008_100_001_002, TRT: 0:28:00 ?

Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr. grew up during World War II, when goods like butter, sugar and gasoline were rationed to support the war effort. He admired the bravery of World War II hero Doris Miller; and applied to the United States Naval Academy, but was denied admission. Upon graduating from high school in 1948, Holmes matriculated at the Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia, where he studied to chemistry and biology under Professor Anita Hall. His classmates included Walter H. Pattillo, Jr., who became the dean of North Carolina Central University's biology school; and future Princeton University Coach Artie Williams. Holmes completed the Hampton Institute's ROTC program; and, upon graduating in 1952, joined the U.S. Army. He was first stationed at Fort Totten in New York City, and then Fort Bliss in Texas. In 1956, Holmes was sent to Germany as the first lieutenant of an anti-aircraft unit. He also talks about the desegregation of the U.S. military under President Harry S. Truman's administration.

Hampton University (Va.).

United States. Army--African Americans.

Military bases, American--Germany.

Military education--United States.

Military art and science--Study and teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr., Section A2008_100_001_003,
TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr. served in the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps in Germany from 1956 to 1959. As commander of the maintenance battalion, he was responsible for the condition of vehicles, weapons and ammunition. Upon returning to the United States, Holmes completed advanced ordnance training; and, until 1963, taught at the United States Army Ordnance School in Aberdeen, Maryland and the Marine Corps Base Quantico in Quantico, Virginia. During the Vietnam War, Holmes was sent to Pleiku, Vietnam as the lieutenant colonel of the 62nd Maintenance Battalion. Upon completing his tour, he studied at the United States Naval War College; and, in 1972, was promoted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, where he worked in the guidance and procedures branch. In 1974, Holmes became the first African American chief of the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps. He also served as the assistant division commander of the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley in Kansas. He remembers General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. and General Harry Brooks, Jr.

Military art and science--Study and teaching.

United States. Army--African Americans.

United States. Army--Ordnance Dept.

Naval War College (U.S.)—Alumni and alumnae.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975.

Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr., Section A2008_100_001_004,
TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr. served in 1977 as the support commander of the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley in Kansas, where he was commended for his exceptional service. At the time, he was also a member of the board responsible for downsizing the U.S. Army after the Vietnam War. Holmes went on to be selected by Secretary of the Army Clifford L. Alexander, Jr. to serve as his executive officer, becoming the first African American to hold that position. With Alexander, Holmes met foreign dignitaries like Panamanian political leader Omar Torrijos. In 1979, Holmes was promoted to brigadier general, and then deputy commander of the U.S. Army Tank Automotive Command. Holmes talks about the problems in the U.S. Army, including the prevalence of drugs and instances of fragging; and remembers his leadership style during the Vietnam War. He also recalls meeting Colin L. Powell in Washington, D.C during the 1960s.

United States--Joint Chiefs of Staff.

United States. Army--Ordnance Dept.

Military discipline--United States.

Alexander, Clifford L., 1933-

Panama Canal (Panama)

Video Oral History Interview with Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr., Section A2008_100_001_005,
TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Maj. Gen. Arthur Holmes, Jr. studied strategy and tactics at the United States Naval War College in Rhode Island, and obtained an M.B.A. degree at Kent State University in Ohio. Upon graduating, he served as a brigadier general and commander of the 706th Maintenance Battalion at Kentucky's Fort Campbell, and worked with arms manufacturers at the U.S. Army Tank Automotive Command. After thirty-five years of service, Holmes retired from the U.S. Army in 1987. He became the vice president of the Automated Sciences Group, Inc., a

black-owned technology company; and was promoted to president and chief operating officer before leaving the company in 1995. He then joined Maryland's Montgomery County Planning Board, and served as the director of the Go Montgomery! program. In 2004, he became the director of the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation. Holmes also reflects upon his life and family, his concerns for the African American community and how he would like to be remembered.

Kent State University.

Montgomery County (Md.)

Retired military personnel--Employment--United States.

United States. Army--Ordnance Dept.