

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gordon-Bray, Arnold N., 1955-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray,
Dates:	August 11, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:12:47).
Abstract:	Brigadier general Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray (1955 -), one of the top-ranking African American generals in the United States Army, held several commands during a thirty-four-year career, including leadership of the 82nd Airborne Division's Falcon Brigade during the Iraq War. Gordon-Bray was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 11, 2013, in Woodbridge, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_224
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

U.S. Army Brigadier General Arnold N. Gordon-Bray was born in Columbia, South Carolina. His parents were Felix Gordon and Martha McNeil, and his stepfather was Isiah Bray. He graduated from Waynesville High School in Waynesville, Missouri in 1973. Gordon-Bray became interested in pursuing a military career when his brother, Michael, began to collect information about the United States Army. Gordon-Bray enrolled at Central Missouri State University (now the University of Central Missouri) in the fall of 1973 as an art major where he joined the Reserve Officer Training Corps program. He graduated from Central Missouri State University with his B.S. degree in art in 1978. Gordon-Bray's military education includes the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the Combined Arms Services and Staff College, the Naval War College, and numerous other military schools.

Gordon-Bray became chief of the training division at Joint Special Operations command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina in 1990. In 1996, he was named commander of the 1st Battalion of the 508th Airborne Combat Team in Vicenza, Italy. In 1999, he graduated from the Air War College in Montgomery, Alabama with his M.A. degree in military strategic studies; and, in 2001, Gordon-Bray graduated with his M.A. degree in operations management and supervision from the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. He then assumed command of the 2nd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, known as the "Falcon Brigade." He led the Falcon Brigade during the early months of the Iraq War in 2003, and then served a second tour of duty in Iraq from 2006 to 2007 as the principal advisor to the Iraqi Ground Force Commander. During 2007, Gordon-Bray became deputy commanding general of the United States Army Cadet Command in Fort Monroe, Virginia. In 2011, Gordon-Bray became deputy director of operations for the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM). He then retired in November of 2012 and then started his own consulting firm, ANGB Consulting, in Fayetteville, North Carolina in January of 2013.

Gordon-Bray military honors include the Legion of Merit (with Oak Leaf Cluster), the Bronze Star, and the Meritorious Service Medal.

Brigadier General Arnold N. Gordon-Bray was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 11, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 11, 2013, in Woodbridge, Virginia, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Brigadier general Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray (1955 -) , one of the top-ranking African American generals in the United States Army, held several commands during a thirty-four-year career, including leadership of the 82nd Airborne Division's Falcon Brigade during the Iraq War.

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:

Gordon-Bray, Arnold N., 1955-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Gordon-Bray, Arnold N., 1955- --Interviews

United States--Armed Forces--African American Generals--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States Army

Occupations:

Brigadier 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 Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray, August 11, 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 Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray, Section A2013_224_001_001,
TRT: 1:29:47 ?

Arnold Gordon-Bray describes his family's history. Gordon-Bray's mother, Martha Lee McNeil Gordon Bray, was born between Lackland and Bishopville, South Carolina, around May 28, 1926. She was the oldest of eight children born to Winfred and Elizabeth McNeil. Gordon-Bray explains how his mother stopped her college education at Benedict College in 1949, after getting married, but went back and completed her degree in 1965. He also recalls his grandmother's farm in Ridgewood, South Carolina, and how chasing chickens there helped him in ranger school. Gordon-Bray's father, Felix Gordon, was born around February 23, 1925. He describes his close relationship with his father, and his death in 2010. Gordon-Bray also talks about his paternal family's entrepreneurship in Columbia, South Carolina, his maternal family's education and service in the armed forces, and explains the reason for writing his name as "Gordon-Bray."

African American families.

African American mothers--South Carolina.

African American grandparents.

African American fathers--South Carolina.

African American entertainers.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray, Section A2013_224_001_002,
TRT: 2:28:09 ?

Arnold Gordon-Bray's father, Felix Gordon, served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Although he served in the official capacity of a cook, he also knew how to use the ship's weapons to help during enemy strikes. Gordon-Bray reflects upon the lack of recognition of African Americans who served during World War II. He talks about his paternal family's presence in Edgefield, South Carolina, and their migration to the north. Gordon-Bray's parents met, married and settled down in Columbia, South Carolina after his father returned from World War II in 1946. He talks about his parents' personalities, his mother's emphasis on education, his height of 6'6", height requirements in the U.S. armed forces, and the reason for his disqualification from being an aviator in the U.S. Army. He also describes his childhood memory of burning an acre of the woods near his home, talks about his siblings, and winning an art contest in the first grade in 1961.

African American fathers--South Carolina.

World War, 1939-1945.

Migration, Internal--United States.

African American mothers--South Carolina.

Childhood--South Carolina.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray, Section A2013_224_001_003,
TRT: 3:29:50 ?

Arnold Gordon-Bray and his five siblings were raised in Columbia, South Carolina. He describes his familiarity with the city, his fond memories of Christmastime while growing up, his parents' efforts to make Christmas special for the family, and how that has influenced his Christmas traditions as an adult. Gordon-Bray's family lived in a working class black neighborhood in the heart of Columbia until 1965, when his parents bought a home in the Colonial Heights

neighborhood. He started school at Carver Elementary School, and then moved to Blessed Martin de Porres School in 1961. Gordon-Bray talks about the quality of education that he received at Blessed Martin, which was run by nuns. In 1966, when integration became law in Columbia, Gordon-Bray transitioned into an integrated school system where his academics suffered. He also talks about his interest in art, and reflects upon what it means to be an artist.

Columbia (S.C.)--Social life and customs.

Christmas--South Carolina.

Education, Primary--South Carolina.

Segregation in education--South Carolina.

Childhood--South Carolina.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray, Section A2013_224_001_004, TRT: 4:30:36 ?

Arnold Gordon-Bray spent his childhood in Columbia, South Carolina, where he grew up during segregation. In 1966, when the integration of schools became enforced in Columbia, Gordon-Bray transferred to Withers School. He describes his experience there, and talks about the stereotyping of African Americans. He also recalls the challenges that his family faced following his parents' divorce the same year. Gordon-Bray later attended Heyward Gibbes Middle School, C.A. Johnson High School and Columbia High School, and describes his social, academic and athletic performance. He also talks about his friend, Kenny Davis, who motivated him to take up athletics. Gordon-Bray's mother married his step-father, Isiah Bray in 1971, and both Bray and Gordon-Bray's brother, Julian, entered the Vietnam War. He also talks about his initial interest in joining the military, and reading Malcolm X's autobiography in high school.

Childhood--South Carolina.

Segregation in education--South Carolina.

Divorce.

Education--South Carolina.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray, Section A2013_224_001_005, TRT: 5:30:13 ?

While in high school in Columbia, South Carolina, Arnold Gordon-Bray was exposed to the contemporary Civil Rights Movement. He talks about Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination, the civil rights era in Columbia, reading Malcolm X's autobiography, and his brother's political radicalization that stemmed from his segregated service in the Vietnam War. In 1972, Gordon-Bray's family moved to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, where his step-father, Isiah Bray, was stationed after the Vietnam War. He describes his growing relationship with his step-father, who encouraged him to join the basketball team at Waynesville High School, and to earn a college degree. Gordon-Bray attended the University of Central Missouri, where he joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), played on the basketball team, and majored in art education. He also talks about the fans that supported him on his college team, maturing as a player, and playing basketball in leagues after graduating from college.

Education, Secondary--South Carolina.

Civil rights movements--Southern States.

College athletes.

University of Central Missouri.

United States. Army. Reserve Officers' Training Corps.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray, Section A2013_224_001_006,
TRT: 6:30:51 ?

Arnold Gordon-Bray enrolled in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program at the University of Central Missouri, and attended camp courses at Fort Riley, Kansas. In 1978, he graduated as a ROTC distinguished military student. Gordon-Bray then went to Fort Benning, Georgia for his commission and was assigned to Fort Jackson, South Carolina for basic training. He talks about his decision to give up basketball to focus on his military career, and being awarded a meritorious service medal as a second lieutenant. He also talks about his assignment to a tour in Korea where he became an executive officer and a platoon leader. Gordon-Bray talks about the importance of training and preparedness, and his experience of running into a minefield while he was in Korea. He also reflects upon the lessons that he learned from his basketball coach, Tom Smith, from the University of Central Missouri.

United States. Army. Reserve Officers' Training Corps.

Fort Riley (Kan.)

Fort Jackson (S.C.).

Korea (South)

University of Central Missouri.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray, Section A2013_224_001_007,
TRT: 7:28:32 ?

After returning from his tour in Korea, Arnold Gordon-Bray attended his advanced training course at Fort Benning, Georgia. He describes his experience there, and talks about meeting his future wife, Alane, in Columbus, Georgia. Choosing between becoming an aviator or an airborne ranger, Gordon-Bray was disqualified from the former due to his hemoglobin count. He describes his experience at ranger school, and his assignment as a company commander with the 101st Airborne Division around 1982. Gordon-Bray also talks about HistoryMaker Lieutenant General Julius Becton, and General Roscoe Robinson, Jr., who became the first African American four-star general in the U.S. Army.

United States. Army.

Korea (South)

Fort Benning (Ga.)

Marriage.

African American generals.

Becton, Julius W. (Julius Wesley), 1926-

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray, Section A2013_224_001_008,
TRT: 8:28:40 ?

In this section of the interview, Arnold Gordon-Bray describes the details of his service in the 101st Division of the U.S. Army. He talks about his assignment as company commander of the headquarters company and as the operations officer of the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment. Gordon-Bray describes his service in Somalia, his service in the aftermath of the plane crash over Gander, Newfoundland in 1985, which killed 248 American soldiers, and his involvement in a joint operation training with the U.S. Marines in the Caribbean. He also discusses his selection as the aide-de-camp to the corps commander in 1986.

United States. Army.

Somalia.

Aircraft accidents--Newfoundland and Labrador.

United States. Army, Caribbean.

Video Oral History Interview with Brig. Gen. Arnold Gordon-Bray, Section A2013_224_001_009,
TRT: 9:16:09 ?

In this section of the interview, Arnold Gordon-Bray describes his service as aide-de-camp to General James J. Lindsay and General John Foss. He also talks about his assignment to the 82nd Airborne Division.

African american generals.

United States. Army Air Forces.