

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Radm. Lillian Fishburne

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Fishburne, Lillian, 1949-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Radm. Lillian Fishburne,
Dates:	March 28, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:41:12).
Abstract:	Rear admiral Radm. Lillian Fishburne (1949 -) was the first African American female to hold the rank of Rear Admiral in the Navy. Fishburne was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 28, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_082
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Fishburne was born on March 25, 1949 in Patuxent River, Maryland. After graduating from Lincoln University (Pennsylvania) with her B.A. degree in 1971, Fishburne enrolled in the U.S. Navy Women's Officers School in Newport, Rhode Island and was commissioned as an Ensign in 1973. Fishburne went on to receive her M.A. degree in management from Webster College in 1980 and her M.S. degree in telecommunications systems management from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in 1982. In addition, she is a 1993 graduate of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, in Washington, D.C.

Fishburne was first assigned as the personnel and legal officer at the the Naval Air Test Facility in Lakehurst, New Jersey. In 1974, she reported to the Recruiting District in Miami, Florida as a Navy officer programs recruiter where she worked until 1977. She then served as the officer-in-charge at the Naval Telecommunications Center in Great Lakes, Illinois. After graduating from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, Fishburne reported to the Command, Control, and Communications Directorate in the office of the Chief of Naval Operations where she served as the assistant head of the Joint Allied Command and Control Matters Branch. In 1984, she became an executive officer at the Naval Communication Station in Yokosuka, Japan before being named as the special projects officer for the Chief of Naval Operations in the Command, Control, and Communications Directorate.

In 1992, Fishburne was appointed as the commanding officer of the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station in Key West, Florida; and, in 1993, she was assigned as the chief of the Command and Control Systems Support Division of the Command, Control, Communications, and Computers Systems Directorate of the Joint Staff at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Fishburne assumed command of the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Eastern Pacific Station in Wahiawa, Hawaii in 1995, and then reported to the Space, Information Warfare, Command and Control Directorate, Chief of Naval Operations where she served as the director of the Information Transfer Division. On February 1, 1998, Fishburne was promoted to U.S. Navy Rear Admiral making her the first African American female to hold the rank of Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy.

Fishburne's decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, two Legion of Merit Medals, two Meritorious Service Medals, two Navy Commendation Medals, and two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals.

Rear Admiral Lillian E. Fishburne was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 28, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Radm. Lillian Fishburne was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 28, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Rear admiral Radm. Lillian Fishburne (1949 -) was the first African American female to hold the rank of Rear Admiral in the Navy.

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:

Fishburne, Lillian, 1949-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Fishburne, Lillian, 1949- --Interviews

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

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Navy

Occupations:

Rear Admiral

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 Radm. Lillian Fishburne, March 28, 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 Radm. Lillian Fishburne, Section A2013_082_001_001, TRT: 1:28:50 ?

Lillian Fishburne describes her family background. Her mother, Ethel Mae McFarland Fishburne, was born on August 5, 1923, in Rocky Point, North Carolina. Her mother graduated high school but did not attend college. Instead she became a housewife when she married Fishburne's father, Isaac Ernest Fishburne, Jr. Her mother's parents, Lillian Beatrice Moore McFarland and Robert McFarland, were farm laborers. Fishburne's paternal grandfather also owned land up near Rocky Point. Fishburne's father was born in 1917 in Georgetown, South Carolina. His parents were Florence Maria Legare Fishburne and Isaac Ernest Fishburne, Sr. Fishburne's father joined the U.S. Navy in the early 1940s, where he became a hospital corpsman. He served overseas in World War II and the Pacific War. He retired from the service as an E7, Chief Petty Officer, in 1964. Fishburne remembers helping her father study for the E7 exam in 1959, when she was eleven years old.

African American families.

African American mothers--North Carolina.

African American fathers.

African American grandparents.

World War, 1939-1945.

Video Oral History Interview with Radm. Lillian Fishburne, Section A2013_082_001_002, TRT: 2:28:46 ?

Lillian Fishburne talks about her older brother, Alvin and explains which of her parents' personalities she takes after. She describes her earliest childhood memories of living in Maryland, New York and North Carolina and visiting her paternal grandmother in South Carolina. She also describes the sights, sound and smells of growing up in the various places her father was stationed during his service in the U.S. Navy, including Taiwan, China. Fishburne remembers her elementary school experience at William H. Blunt Elementary in East Wilmington, North Carolina and family's move to Rockville, North Carolina in the late 1950s. Fishburne talks about her junior high school and high school experience. She attended Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville, where she participated on the pompom squad and school newspaper. Additionally, Fishburne discusses her childhood interests and the role that church played in her growing up.

African American families.

Childhood--United States.

Education--United States.

Moving, Household.

African American churches.

Video Oral History Interview with Radm. Lillian Fishburne, Section A2013_082_001_003, TRT: 3:28:13 ?

Lillian Fishburne discusses her career aspirations in high school. She remembers wanting to become a pediatrician because her mother remarked how difficult it was to find one. Fishburne studied a year at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania before transferring to Lincoln University, where she studied sociology. Fishburne was friends with spoken word artist, Gil Scott Heron, at Lincoln University. She remembers him letting her read a draft of his first novel.

Fishburne talks about her job search after college and joining the U.S. Navy in 1972. She discusses her military training in Newport, Rhode Island and comments on the treatment of minority women in the U.S. Navy. She also speaks about the small number of black women officers in the U.S. Navy during her service and describes her duties as an ensign.

Education, Secondary.

Lincoln University (Pa.).

Scott-Heron, Gil, 1949-2011.

United States. Navy--Women.

Navy-yards and naval stations--Rhode Island--Newport.

Video Oral History Interview with Radm. Lillian Fishburne, Section A2013_082_001_004, TRT: 4:29:56 ?

Lillian Fishburne discusses her first assignment at the U.S. Naval Air Test Facility in Lakehurst, New Jersey--where she was a personnel and legal officer. She explains that she was a witness to the Blue Angels crash of the early 1970s and was one of the first to arrive at the crash site. In 1974, she reported to the U.S. Navy Recruiting District in Miami, Florida, where she worked as a recruiting officer until 1977. She then served as the officer-in-charge at the Naval Telecommunications Center in Great Lakes, Illinois. Fishburne met her husband in Great Lakes and they were married in June of 1980. She graduated from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in 1982, where she studied telecommunications. She also gave birth to her daughter in February of that year. In 1984, she became an executive officer at the Naval Communication Station in Yokosuka, Japan. Eight years later, Fishburne was appointed as the commanding officer of the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station in Key West, Florida.

United States. Naval Flight Demonstration Squadron.

Aircraft accidents.

United States.--Navy--Recruiting, enlistment, etc.

Marriage.

United States. Navy.

United States--Armed Forces--Communication systems.

Video Oral History Interview with Radm. Lillian Fishburne, Section A2013_082_001_005, TRT: 5:29:00 ?

Lillian Fishburne was made chief of the Command and Control Systems Support Division of the Command, Control, Communications, and Computers Systems Directorate of the Joint Staff at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. in 1993. Fishburne reflects on her work in 1995 with the Joint Staff and discusses her command of the Naval Computer Telecommunications Station in Wahiawa, Hawaii. In 1998, Fishburne was promoted to U.S. Navy Rear Admiral; making her the first African American female to hold this rank in the U.S. Navy. Fishburne talks about being the U.S. Navy's first African American female rear admiral and describes some of the challenges for women in the Navy. She also discusses her family and her retirement from the U.S. Navy in 2001. Fishburne talks about taking care of her mother in 2002 and her interest in helping underprivileged children. She talks about her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and reflects upon her legacy.

United States--Armed Forces--Communication systems.

Military administration--United States.

Pentagon (Va.)

Wahiawa (Hawaii)

African American families.

Reminiscing.

Video Oral History Interview with Radm. Lillian Fishburne, Section A2013_082_001_006, TRT:
6:16:27 ?

Lillian Fishburne talks about her family and her philosophy on management.
She shares how she would like to be remembered and describes her photos.

Management & leadership skills.

Reminiscing.

Photographs.