

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Roy Chappell

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## Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Chappell, Roy Martis, 1921-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Roy Chappell,
Dates:	May 14, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:18:36).
Abstract:	High school teacher and tuskegee airman Roy Chappell (1921 - 2002 ) was the president of the Dodo Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen. In addition to his work as a teacher, Chappell was also a youth volunteer. Chappell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 14, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_073
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Decorated World War II Air Force veteran and Tuskegee Airman Roy M. Chappell was among a group of African American aviators in the Tuskegee Airmen division that led the way to integrating the armed forces. Born in Williamsburg, Kentucky to Lionel and Flora Chappell, Roy Chappell grew up in Monroe, Michigan, where he was in the top 10 percent of his high school graduating class. In 1940, he left Monroe to attend Kentucky State University, majoring in chemistry. In 1942, during his third year of studies, he was drafted into the armed forces.

In 1944, Chappell underwent navigator training in Hondo, Texas and bombardier training at Randolph Field, Texas. Upon completion, he served as a B-25 bombardier/navigator with the 477th Bombardment Group. In 1945, Chappell was one of the 101 black officers who were arrested for trying to integrate a segregated officers club in what became known as the Freeman Field Mutiny. That same year, Chappell married his wife, Lucy, with whom he had two daughters, Camille and Kathy.

After the war, Chappell completed his education, receiving his B.S. degree in psychology. He went on to become an educator, working as a teacher and guidance counselor in Chicago, Illinois for thirty years, retiring in 1985.

After retiring, Chappell served as the Chicago "DODO" Chapter Tuskegee Airmen President and as the Chairman of the Friends of Meigs Field Board of Directors. On July 25, 2001, Chappell was awarded the Phillips 66 Aviation Leadership Award, recognized as one of the most prestigious civilian aviation awards. Chappell coordinated the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Young Eagles Program and received a Humanitarian Award from the EAA for his efforts. He was also involved with the Chicago Youth in Aviation Project and the Black Star Project of Chicago.

Chappell passed away on September 23, 2002 at age 81.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Roy Chappell was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 14, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. High school teacher and tuskegee airman Roy Chappell (1921 - 2002 ) was the president of the Dodo Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen. In addition to his work as a teacher, Chappell was also a youth volunteer.

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# 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®.

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# 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.

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# Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

## Persons:

Chappell, Roy Martis, 1921-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Chappell, Roy Martis, 1921---Interviews

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# Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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United States. Army Air Forces. Fighter Group, 332nd.

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## Occupations:

Tuskegee Airman

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MilitaryMakers

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## 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 Roy Chappell, May 14, 2002. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Roy Chappell, Section A2002\_073\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:47 ?

Roy Chappell describes his family background. His mother, Flora Chappell, was born at the turn of the 20th century in Williamsburg, Kentucky. His father, Lionold Chappell, was a mess sergeant for the Buffalo Soldiers Regiment as well as a hotel cook. The Chappell family lived in Williamsburg, Kentucky until his father got work in Monroe, Michigan when Roy Chappell was in second grade. Chappell attended Monroe High School, an integrated school, where he

was a good student and an accomplished track athlete. Chappell recalls traveling to track meets and being refused service at restaurants due to his race.

Chappell's father died when he was a senior in high school, but Chappell raised enough money to attend Kentucky State University in Frankfort, Kentucky until he was drafted to serve in World War II in 1943. Chappell passed a test to join the Army Air Corps and completed basic training in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy Chappell, Section A2002\_073\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:43 ?

Roy Chappell describes flight training at Tuskegee, Alabama in 1943. Although Chappell did not know how to drive a car before joining the service and had an early mishap where he got lost and had to land in a farmer's field, he learned to fly a plane and eventually became a navigator. Tuskegee was open to African Americans only after an organized social movement by the NAACP and black newspapers called for better treatment and more opportunities for African Americans. When Eleanor Roosevelt visited Tuskegee in 1941, she flew with Chief Charles Alfred Anderson for over thirty minutes and expressed her support of the program. Chappell and other black officers faced discrimination and launched a media protest when they were not permitted entrance to the Officers Club.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy Chappell, Section A2002\_073\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:29 ?

Roy Chappell talks about his military service as a Tuskegee Airman in World War II. Chappell faced racial discrimination due to white servicemen who refused to salute and be commanded by black officers. After completing bombardiering school, Chappell was sent to Freeman Field in Indiana where he joined others in protesting the segregated Officers Clubs. When Chappell and other black officers refused to sign a memorandum agreeing to segregation, they were court martialed and reprimanded formally. Fifty years later, President Bill Clinton expunged the reprimand from their records. The Tuskegee Airmen and the protest at Freeman Field led to the eventual integration of the U.S. Air Force. Chappell describes the famous Red Tail airplanes that the Tuskegee airmen flew and how the heroism of black units in combat went unrecognized. The Tuskegee Airmen faced discrimination from the commercial airline industry. After leaving military service in 1945, Chappell worked at the Post Office while finishing his college degree. Chappell then worked as a teacher at Carnegie Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy Chappell, Section A2002\_073\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:06 ?

Roy Chappell talks about how the Tuskegee Airmen gained national recognition and formed chapters across the country beginning in the 1970s. Chappell was heavily involved in a number of youth outreach programs including the Young Eagles which teaches young people how to fly. Chappell discusses the legacies of other famous black pilots such as Janet Harmon Bragg and Detroit, Michigan Mayor Coleman Young. Chappell describes the strong bonds of friendship that he forged with other Tuskegee Airmen that lasted over fifty years. Chappell says that the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen is to inspire children to follow their dreams. Chappell wants to be remembered as a family man who helped young people achieve what they want in life.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy Chappell, Section A2002\_073\_001\_005, TRT: 0:09:39 ?

Roy Chappell narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy Chappell, Section A2002\_073\_001\_006, TRT: 0:10:52 ?

Roy Chappell narrates his photographs.