

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Peter T. Thomas

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Alternatives in Illinois Education Oral History project

Interview # EA-A-L-2018-063

Sergeant Major Peter T. Thomas, the executive Director of the Lincoln's ChalleNGe Academy in Rantoul, Illinois, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education is Key-Alternatives in Education* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Oct 22, 2018 Location: Lincoln ChalleNGe Academy, Rantoul, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:20 / 1.33 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on March 19, 2019.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

Interview being
processed

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Abstract

Peter T. Thomas, *Alternatives in Education*, EA-A-L-2018-063

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Peter Thomas was born in June 1944 in East Orange, New Jersey. First living in White Plains, New York, Peter then moved in with his grandmother in Darlington, South Carolina. While in high school, Peter was involved in both football and basketball. Later, he earned a mortuary science degree from McAllister Mortuary School in New York City. He worked in this field before joining the military, serving the bulk of his thirty-year career with the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions. Peter's military career took him into the Dominican Republic (1965-67), for four years in South Vietnam, including the 1968 Tet Offensive, and a tour in South Korea as well. He finished his military career with the Illinois Army National Guard. In 1993, SGM Thomas began his involvement with the Lincoln Challenge Academy. He has served as its director until his retirement at the end of 2018.

This interview details the history of the Lincoln Challenge Academy which was created by the 1993 Defense Authorization Act. SGM Thomas describes the conversion of the former Chanute Air Force base into a campus that could hold 400 cadets per term. He discussed the eight core objectives (Academic Excellence, Job Skills, Physical Fitness, Leadership/Followership, Health/Sex Education and Nutrition, Life and Coping skills, Responsible Citizenship, and Service to Community) which are emphasized during the five- and one-half month course of instruction. In addition, he talks about the importance of each student's mentor, who meets monthly with the former cadet for one year after leaving the program. Other topics include extra activities, funding from federal and state sources, the relationship with village of Rantoul, student eligibility, a typical day for the cadet, and the teaching/staff work force.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Lincoln Challenge Academy; Rantoul, Illinois; Chanute Air Force Base; eight core objectives of Lincoln Challenge; 1993 Defense Authorization Act; *Forging a Military Corps* study published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies; role of the mentor in the Lincoln Challenge program; graduate equivalency degree;

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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