

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Timuel Black

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember - WWII Oral History project

Interview # VR2-A-L-2009-027

Timuel Black, an African American WW II veteran who grew up in Chicago's Black Belt during the 1920s and '30s, and fought in Europe with the U.S. Army in 1944-1945, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember – WWII* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: August 11, 2009 Location: First Unitarian Church, Hyde Park, Chicago, IL

Date: September 3, 2009 Location: Kenwood neighborhood, Chicago, IL.

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Cheryl Wycoff & Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteers

Total Pages: 59 pgs Total Time: 2:12 + 1:23 / 2.2 hrs + 1.38 hrs = 3.58 hrs

Session 1: Early life through Army Basic Training in 1943-44.

Session 2: Service in England, France and Germany during WW II

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 09/22/2009.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Timuel Black, *Veterans Remember*, VR2-A-L-2009-027

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Timuel Black was born on December 7th, 1918 in Birmingham, Alabama. The family moved the next year to the south side of Chicago, just months after the Chicago Race Riots in 1919. He grew up in the 'Black Belt' of Chicago, with his parents stressing the importance of an education, even in an era of discrimination and hard economic times. Black graduated from Du Sable High School in 1937, and then worked in a variety of jobs in the neighborhood. In December of 1941 he was working for a fur dealer in Milwaukee, but returned to Chicago and began selling insurance before being drafted in 1943.

Black was inducted into the Army at Camp Custer, Michigan, then was shipped to Ft. Lee, Virginia for Basic Training. He received training in logistics and was soon assigned to the 308th Quartermaster Railhead Company. While in Virginia, Black was exposed to more overt forms of racism – southern style, and observed differences between northern urban blacks, and the mostly rural blacks of the south. His unit shipped to Wales in early 1944, and was eventually moved to an encampment near Southampton, England for further training and preparations for the D-Day landings. He found the local population more welcoming than back in the United States. The 308th landed on Utah Beach just days after the initial landings, and the troops were soon performing their duties, first with the First Army, then with the Third Army under Gen. George Patton, as the Allies drove across northern France. The unit's more menial tasks were performed by captured German POWs. Black's unit participated in the Battle of the Bulge, as well as fighting in the Rhineland. He saw the Buchenwald Concentration Camp several days following its liberation by U.S. forces, an event that deeply affected him. Thereafter, he committed his life to the cause of civil rights.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Chicago Race Riots of 1919; Chicago's Black Belt; Bronzeville, Chicago; Chicago *Defender*; Harlem Globetrotters; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Lorraine Hansberry; Hansberry vs. Lee; Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black; Ft. Lee, Virginia; 308th Quartermaster Railhead Company; Southampton, England; liberation of Paris in 1944; Battle of the Bulge; Buchenwald Concentration Camp

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