

2013 Black History Month

MPMA
Montford Point
Marine Association, Inc.



Press Release

FROM CIVIL RIGHTS - TO HUMAN RIGHTS One Montford Point Marine's Story Cecil B. Moore



Martin Luther King, Jr.

Cecil B. Moore

Cecil was a delegate to the White House Conference on Civil Rights in 1965 and 1966, He wore Marine boots and dungarees in the Meridith March from Memphis to Jackson, Mississippi in 1966, Moore was a 3rd Party Candidate for Mayor of Philadelphia in 1967, He even made money in court during the prolonged trials in 1973 of the defendants in the Altemose Construction case at Valley Forge.

CECIL B. MOORE



TENTH ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION HONORARY CHAIRMAN

"TENS-HUT!" Cecil barked the command as an opener when he recently addressed the Philadelphia Chapter. He called the roll of a few men present and mentioned what they were doing in 1965, when he was legal advisor to the group who put together the first National reunion. Moore then talked about the early days at Montford Point in 1942 and 1943 . . . he was Classification NCO, interviewing and assigning the first men of color to wear the Marine uniform. "They came from every state and 700 out of every 1,000 were college graduates. These black professors and students were Marine Privates and most of the white NCO's and officers hadn't finished high school!" Moore's language has always been laced with colorful cuss words, so that isn't exactly the way he said it.

Half an hour later, by the time he reached for a glass of Old Granddad and water, Cecil had talked about everything that has happened in the past 35 years relating to Philadelphia and Civil Rights. Born in Yukon, West Virginia, Moore grew up in the mountain towns of Gary, Welch and Bluefield . . . attended West Virginia State and Bluefield State colleges before he enlisted in the Marines. His father was a doctor and Cecil states he came from four generations of professionals. But all his life, he has championed the underdog and associated with grass roots people.

The Marine Corps had been lily white for 167 years and when the barriers were dropped in 1942, many well educated black men joined the elite corps as Privates. "We had so many blacks down there with degrees, they tried to screw us up and started sending illiterate recruits to the Point. But, we took care of that: the learned taught the illiterate to read and write, to learn the General Orders and rifle nomenclature. It was a proud bleeping day at recruit graduation when shiny head Privates with Master degrees passed muster with bald headed boots who had never been to school!" Following a Motor Transport 1st Sergeant assignment, Cecil shipped out in early 1944 as 1st Sergeant of the 19th Depot, the first black Marines engaged in actual combat. This was on Tinian and Saipan in the Marianas. The 19th, with Moore at the helm, also saw action on Okinawa in 1945. "I could have been commissioned when they made the first black officers, but I knew the mortality rate for Marine 2nd Lieutenants in combat."

They returned to Montford Point in 1946 and Cecil served as Sgt. Major of the 52nd Defense Bn., winding down the military at the close of World War II. The principal function was the Casual Company job of releasing personnel from active duty. Moore assisted in forming the 3rd AAA Bn. In 1947 he was transferred to Fort Mifflin near Philadelphia as Sgt Major of a detachment whose prime mission was ammunition security. Many Philadelphians think there is a connection, for he has been explosive on this scene ever since.

Cecil went to law school at Temple University in 1949, was released from active duty in August 1951. He worked as a liquor salesman for Continental Distillers, pushing Old Hickory, until he started a law practice in 1954. Two hours after admission to the Bar, Moore had his first legal case and he quit the liquor company. By any modest estimate, that was over 100,000 cases ago (of clients, not booze). Informed sources allow he has handled more cases, has won more "not guilty" verdicts than any other U. S. Lawyer. And most were done for free.

Cecil says, "I never made a nickel from the Civil Rights Movement. Everybody thinks civil rights are free. It left me bankrupt." If he feels a cause is just, he handles the case, with or without pay.

Moore has always been active in politics, was a 17 year old Democrat in 1932. As a Republican Committeeman in 1952, he was Co-founder, with Rev. Leon Sullivan, of the Committee Against Juvenile Delinquency; he was elected it's President in 1959. This was after he had run an exciting campaign in 1957 (against Robert N. C. Nix) to become the first black man from Penna. to go to Congress. Cecil was elected President of the Phila. NAACP Chapter in 1962 and the membership skyrocketed to 50 or 60 thousand in the first year.

In the 6 years of his tenure, perhaps the most effective demonstrations this country has known took place . . . getting results. The bus companies, the railroads, the Post Office, the banks, the phone companies . . . as Moore likes to tell it . . . "from the pressure of my lines, they got some instant niggers." Possibly the biggest demonstration ever occurred one day at the 31st and Dauphin construction site when more than 20,000 pickets were on hand. It resulted with Blacks in the crafts unions for the first time. His voters registration campaign from June to September 1964 netted more than 150,000 registrants. On one hot evening in August 1964, Cecil was called from his Wildwood, N. J. retreat to quell the riots that raged on his North Philadelphia turf. Even his sternest critics acknowledge that more than any man, Cecil Moore cracked the lily-white bastions of Girard College. Today 105 out of its' 300 students are black. But, it took patience by an impatient man. It was the longest continuous demonstration in Civil Rights history: 7 months and 17 days.

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Without question, the Honorary Chairman of the Tenth Anniversary Convention of Montford Point Marines is an original. Consistent is the word to describe Cecil Moore. There are many who say he is 40 years ahead of his time. There are others who say Moore has mellowed; they cite his support of Nix in the last Congressional election, his support of the City Committee in the recent Democratic Primary. Cecil has been saying "I'm the goddamn boss!" for over 30 years now - just as loudly today as ever. And there are Moore believers today than ever. Elected to a seat in City Council in May, soon there is likely to be Moore explosions than ever.

Wearing \$300 silk suits and smoking expensive cigars, Cecil claims to owe IRS a quarter-million dollars. "Sure I file," he says, "I just don't pay. It ain't against the law not to pay; I ain't got nothin'." Moore just likes to drink Old Granddad wherever he is . . . and stand on the corner and shoot the breeze with the boys (He doesn't say "breeze").

You'll find his law offices lined with people, late any evening . . . mostly the poor and oppressed. They know they will be heard . . . probably in court, represented by the most astute criminal lawyer in the land.