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Dorie Miller, War Hero

The National Archives holds a wealth of material documenting the African American experience. In honor of African American History Month this February, we pay tribute to the struggles and achievements of the people and events that have shaped our nation. Today we share the story of Doris (“Dorie”) Miller, a U.S. Navy sailor in service on board the USS West Virginia during the attack on Pearl Harbor.

USS Doris Miller (CVN 81)

Just this week, the U.S. Navy announced that the newest aircraft carrier would be named after Dorie Miller, the first named for an African American. Learn more on

[Navy Line, The Official Blog of the U.S. Navy.](#)



"Above and beyond the call of duty" [National Archives Identifier 513747](#)

At 7:48 am on December 7, 1941, Japanese fighter planes and bombers began their surprise attack on the U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. In two waves of attack, the Japanese sunk four battleships and destroyed 188 aircraft. The attack also damaged four other battleships, three cruisers, three destroyers, an anti-aircraft training ship, and one minelayer. The early morning attack killed 2,403 Americans and injured another 1,178. The attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese caused the United States to enter World War II.

Although there were limited opportunities for African Americans in the Armed Forces, 2.5 million black men registered for the draft and thousands of black women joined auxiliary units. African Americans generally served in segregated combat support groups with limited military engagement. On the homefront, African Americans supported the "Double-V" campaign, which meant victory against fascism abroad and victory against racism at home, in addition to supporting the March on Washington campaign in 1941, in an effort to demand equal employment in the defense industries.



"DECEMBER 7th - REMEMBER!!", 1943, [National Archives Identifier 535613](#)

Navy Messman Third Class Dorie Miller, was born on October 12, 1919 in Waco, Texas. Miller joined the U.S. Navy in 1939, and was made a mess attendant, then cook, aboard the USS West Virginia. During the Pearl Harbor attack, Miller first ensured the safety of several crewmates, before he began firing at Japanese warplanes with a 50 caliber anti-aircraft gun. Miller shot down two Japanese aircraft (possibly downed two more) during the raid.



Photograph of the USS West Virginia and the USS Tennessee after the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor, 12/7/1941, [National Archives Identifier 12008986](#)

In Record Group 80 Correspondence Relating to Discrimination, 1941-1944 ([National Archives Identifier 120920855](#)) series, the file unit Dorie Miller ([National Archives Identifier 26416709](#)) contains memorandums, letters, and newspaper coupons from the black community to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, encouraging him to admit Miller to the Naval Academy. As a messman, Miller was ineligible for military training, even though he was a hero in the Pearl Harbor attack. The letters and coupons from black newspapers to Roosevelt received attention from the president and were forwarded to the Navy Department. However, Miller was too old to attend the Naval Academy. Only candidates for midshipmen between the ages of 17 and 21 were considered. Miller was 23-years-old.

Following Pearl Harbor, Miller received a Navy Cross from Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. He would later receive the Purple Heart, the American Defense Service Medal – Fleet Clasp, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. In the spring of 1943, he was assigned to the USS Liscome Bay (still at the rank of messman), when he was killed during a Japanese submarine attack on November 24, 1943 near the Gilbert Islands in the Pacific.

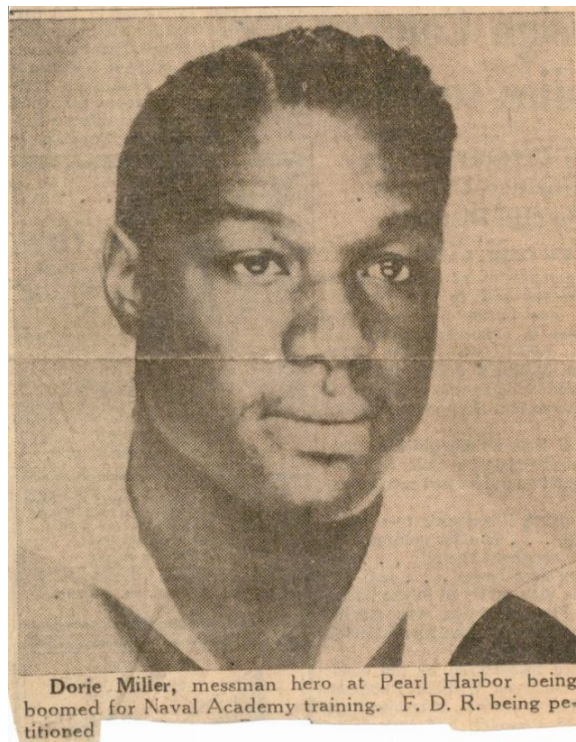


Image of Dorie Miller, [National Archives Identifier 26416709](#)

Many thanks to Dr. Tina L. Ligon, Supervisory Archivist at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland. This feature was adapted from her post on the [Rediscovering Black History](#) blog for the 75th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor.

Explore further

The National Archives holds a wealth of material related to the interactions of African Americans with the Federal government—captured in millions of historical records including the Emancipation Proclamation, census records, military service records, and records documenting the civil rights movement.

Learn more on our website:

<https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/african-american-history>

<https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans>

Explore a selection of records documenting this vast history within the [National Archives Catalog](#).

Citizen Archivist Transcription Mission

Help us finish transcribing the [Official Military Personnel File for Doris Miller](#).

NRB Form 11
NRB-17106-2-12-15-21M-A280-281.

AGE CERTIFICATE

RFD #1, Box #339
(Street address of parent or guardian)

Waco, Wollman TEXAS
(City) (County) (State)

30 MARCH 1929 19
(Date) (Year)

I hereby certify that Doris Miller (Name of applicant in full) was born on October 12 1919 at Waco (Month) (Day) (Year) in the State of TEXAS (State)

Conery Miller (Name of parent or guardian) who is the FATHER (Relationship) of the applicant.

Witness to above signature of Conery Miller who is the FATHER (Relationship) of the applicant.

Seal of Witnessing Official
B.A. Gooding (Signature of witness)
707 Washington St (Address of witness)
Notary Public in and for the State of Texas (Title or position of witness)

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES March 1937 (Date)

In signing the above certificate, the parent is not binding the son to serve, but is only certifying to the age and place of birth of the son as required by law before the son can be enlisted.

The above signature of parent or guardian must be verified by the Recruiting Officer, or by one of the following public officials of the community in which the parents reside, viz: Notary Public, Justice of the Peace, Commissioner of Deeds, Postmaster, or other U. S. Official, Mayor, Sheriff, Clerk of Police, an Officer of the Court, Alderman, Constable, Marshal, Pastor of a Church, or School Superintendent, who shall fill out the above form, sign it, and write his official title and address after his name.

IMPORTANT

Applicants for enlistment must be American citizens, native or naturalized. Navy recruiting officers are required to certify as to the U. S. citizenship of all recruits for the Navy and it is therefore necessary that all eligible applicants, present to the recruiting officer, one of the following:

- A birth certificate from proper state, city, or church authorities, OR
- The above Age Certificate properly filled out and signed by one of the parents or legal guardian. Erasures must be carefully avoided.
- In case of persons born in foreign countries, final naturalization papers of the applicant, or of parent if naturalized during the applicant's minority, must be presented.
- No person under the age of 17 can enlist in the Navy. Applicants between 17 and 21 years of age must furnish the written consent of parent or guardian on forms provided for that purpose, called Consent Papers, which forms will be supplied on request at any Navy Recruiting Station.

ALL APPLICANTS MUST PASS THE REQUIRED PHYSICAL EXAMINATION BY THE NAVY MEDICAL EXAMINING OFFICER, AT A NAVY RECRUITING STATION.

0 5782-564

APPLICANT IDENTIFICATION RECORD

DO NOT FOLD THIS FORM

Classification No. 1170 250 M 8
M170 00

RIGHT HAND				
1. Thumb	2. Index	3. Middle	4. Ring	5. Little
LEFT HAND				
6. Thumb	7. Index	8. Middle	9. Ring	10. Little
LEFT HAND		RIGHT HAND		
Plain impression of the four fingers taken simultaneously and of thumb.		Plain impression of the four fingers taken simultaneously and of thumb.		

NRB Form No. 49

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Get started transcribing!

Transcription Challenge Update

Subpoena to Produce Documents or Object

United States District Court
FOR THE
DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
v.
JOHN DOE

To Isaac Charles Haber
Peaceable Company Co.
40 Broad Street
Boston, Massachusetts

You are hereby commanded to appear in the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts at U.S. Post Office & Courthouse, the city of Boston on the 30th day of December 1952 at 10:00 o'clock A.M. to testify in the case of United States v. John Doe and bring with you records, data, memoranda or writings of any sort whatsoever pertaining to bail furnished in the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts for Paul T. Buckley, Mary A. Buckley, Donald T. O'Grady, Joseph Haffie, Edward A. Bennett, John H. Carless, Joseph Banfield, John W. Daly, Vincent Calk and Thomas J. Richardson, also records, data, memoranda or writings of any sort whatsoever pertaining to bail or proposed bail furnished for Stanley Sanderson and Joseph J. Vignery, said bail to be furnished in the State of Pennsylvania.

RETURN HEREIN TO SAID U.S. DIST. CLERK, Lawrence H. Moran
FEDERAL BLDG., 1107 U.S. F.C. & COM. BLDG., BOSTON.

Date: December 29, 1952. By _____ Deputy Clerk.

"Said 'United States' or 'Subpoena' as the case may be."

RETURN

Received this subpoena at 5:30 P.M. on December 29, 1952 and on December 29, 1952 at 9:05 P.M. on December 29, 1952 served it on the within named at his residence, 431 Washington St., Franklin, Mass., by delivering a copy to his wife and tendering to her the fee for one day's attendance and the mileage allowed by law.

Dated: _____
Lawrence H. Moran

Service Fee _____
Travel _____
Fees _____
Total _____

In our last newsletter, we asked for your help transcribing the [Brink's Robbery case file](#), which contains materials pertaining to the U.S. Attorney's investigation and prosecution of the January 17, 1950 armed robbery of the Brink's Building in the North End of Boston, Massachusetts.

Wow! 13 Citizen Archivists transcribed 342 of 538 pages. Will you help us finish transcribing the Brink's Robbery case file?

New to the citizen archivist program? [Learn how to register and get started.](#)

Get started transcribing!

Questions or comments? Email us at catalog@nara.gov.



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