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Joseph Mays (January 31, 2018)

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Bridges That Carried Us Over Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Joseph Mays

Interviewer:

Interviewer

Interview Date:

January 31, 2018

Interview Location:

Unknown

Length:

00:15:25

Interview Summary completed by:

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

Description:

In this interview, Joseph Mays is the guest. After being stationed in Japan, Mays goes to Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino in 1974. There, he brought his love of motorcycles from Japan and eventually joined a club called the Black Fox. After being accepted into the club, Mays later took over as club president for a year. Mays also talks about connecting with law enforcement and holding dances with other motorcycle clubs. Due to him having to return to the military, he left the club with enough supplies, and the lease paid for six months. However, Black Fox disbanded after those six months and never was renewed. The interview ends with Mays talking about meeting other motorcycle clubs and even some motorcycle gangs. Though they were run-ins, Mays said he learned from these gangs and created peaceful relationships between them and his club.

Subject Topic:

- Motorcycle Club
- Military Service
- Leadership
- Annual Motorcycle Club Dance
- Disbandment
- Motorcycle Clubs vs Motorcycle Gangs
- Military Career

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
Norton Air Force Base	San Bernardino, CA (Defunct Location)
Yokota Air Base	Ishihata, Mizuho, Nishitama District, Tokyo, Tokyo 190-1211, Japan

Black Fox Club House	San Bernardino, CA
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Temporal Coverage:

1974 - 2018

Key Events:

- Mays comes from Japan to the Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino.
- He eventually is accepted into a club and works his way up the ladder.
- Meeting with law enforcement so that the club is not seen as a bad group.
- Annual dance with multiple motorcycle clubs.
- Leaving to go back to the military and the club eventually disbanding.
- How the name of the club became "Black Fox".
- Meeting with other clubs and coming across actual motorcycle gangs.

Key Organizations:

- Black Fox

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:01:14 - 00:04:42	Mays discusses his time in the Air Force and his story of getting into a motorcycle club.
Digital Video	00:07:13 - 00:11:00	Mays explains the dance and the eventual conflict between the club and being in the military.
Digital Video	00:11:02 - 00:15:03	The eventual disbandment of the Black Fox and other club stories.

Related Materials

Additional oral history interviews are available from the Bridges That Carried Us Over Project at CSUSB, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/bridges/>

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

Q: It's just part two of your interview. So if you want to start off yours once I'm completed and saying part two of your interview, then I'll pause and you can say, well, you know, once again I'm Joe Mays, and kind of go into whatever you want to talk about. Kind of lead yourself into the motorcycle club. Joe Mays, you were interviewed December 4, 2014, and the majority of that interview was about Jack Hill, the first Black caterer in San Bernardino. Today, January 31, 2018, we will talk about the motorcycle club, [00:01:00] part two of your interview.

JOSEPH MAYS: Thank you. Previously I introduced myself and said who I am and everything, so I don't need if I necessarily need to go through that again. But I arrived in San Bernardino on the fourth of January 1974 and I was stationed at Norton Air Force Base. Prior to me being stationed at Norton, I was stationed in Japan, Yokota Air Base Japan. While I was over there I purchased several motorcycles and I brought one of them back with me to California. Once I got stationed at Norton I started riding my motorcycle around to get familiar with the community and everything, and I met some people -- (clears throat) excuse me -- [00:02:00] met some people that were in a motorcycle club and they asked me if I wanted to join. I said, yeah, I'll think about it, and they invited me to a meeting. They had a clubhouse set up down on a -- at that time it was called Muscott, Muscott and Baseline, but now it's called Medical Center. I went to the clubhouse and met several people down there, they had about 30 members, and several of them had been in the Air Force, and I didn't know this, but once I got to meet the members that encouraged me to join the group. So in May of 1974 I joined the group. I was a prospect for about three months. A prospect [00:03:00] is a person

that you're in training to be a club member and the president and the vice president have their requirements and stuff. You're actually an aide to them to help them do anything they want to do. You take care of their motorcycle, you take care of -- when they go to a club or something, you get their drinks for them. You're a gofer essentially. I got through the prospect period pretty good and then I became a member. I saw that the club was lacking some organization so I decided that I wanted to become more of a part of the club, so I asked for a position in the club. The first position I got in the club [00:04:00] was being the treasurer. That worked out pretty good for me because after I came up on my first year being a member of the club, I decided to run for president of the club because most of the people needed leadership, but they didn't want to be a leader. They knew that they needed a strong leader. I thought that because I saw some inefficiencies and some un-organization in the club, I decided that I would run for president, and I did. I ran for president and once I became the president we realized that that little clubhouse that we had down on Muscott and Baseline was too small, so we had to look for a different building. So we moved up on [00:05:00] Mount Vernon and Highland, we moved to a new building. We went in there and when I became president after we got our new building, the first thing I wanted to do was move the club over there. We moved them over there, got them over there, and then I had to set up my staff. I had vice president, which was Bobby Wilson, and I replaced the president, which was Harvey Wilson, and Bobby Wilson were cousins. So I made Bobby Wilson my vice president, I made Jim [Telfy?] my treasurer, and I had several people that appointed to our sergeant at arms, and I set up my whole club organized like a business would be organized. We went to -- the first thing that [00:06:00] I thought that I needed to do in order for us not to get a bad name was to make sure that we were thoroughly familiar and introduced to all of the policemen and the law authority

in San Bernardino. So I went down to the police department and introduced myself and told them what I was planning to do, wanted to build this club, and everything, and they appointed one person to me, and we became real close -- a policeman, and we became real close friends, and he took by the hand and told me that you can't get involved in any kind of illegal activities, because if you do I'll have to arrest you just like I arrest anybody else. My intention then was to not do anything illegal or try to keep most [00:07:00] of the illegal activities out of the club. So we had a good relationship with the San Bernardino police department. Shortly after we moved into our new building over there on Highland, we had our first annual dance. That's when you invite all the motorcycle clubs in California to your dance. I went down and told my policeman that we were going to be bringing in a lot of bikes that weekend, it was going to last Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday we would dissipate. He said, "We'll be looking out for you." He said, "As long as they don't break any laws and stuff like this, I guarantee you we won't be writing any tickets, we'll be helping you out more than looking for trouble. If they're not looking for trouble, we're not." So I got the word out to all of the motorcycle clubs in Southern California and Central California [00:08:00] because we didn't have too many contacts with the motorcycle clubs in Northern California. When we had our annual dance, we had 750 motorcycles up and down Mount Vernon and they stayed in there -- Friday night starting eight o'clock Friday night, we went through all night Friday night, all day Saturday, all night Saturday night, and Sunday they went home. And that was one of the biggest events in Southern California. As a matter of fact, it was the talk of Southern California at the time we put that together. And when you have your annual dance, they bring in gifts from each one of the clubs. They bring in a gift because they want to help you out if you're in debt or anything, they want to help you pay your bills, stuff like this. But we were off to a pretty good

start because I hired a company to bring in a jukebox [00:09:00] and to bring in two pool tables. I remember clearly our lease on that building was \$175 a month and we made the lease with the jukebox. The jukebox paid our lease and all the money from the pool table was just gravy after that. Each one of the club members I tasked them with a \$5 a month club dues. We were up and rolling, one of the most noted clubs in Southern California. I had all kinds of stock back in the back room, we had -- we only served liquor -- I mean, we only served beer and wine, we couldn't serve any liquor because we couldn't get a liquor license. But we had so much beer stocked up and so much wine stocked up, we were [00:10:00] in good shape. Then it got to be so compelling for me to be at all of the functions and be there through all the stuff, and being in the military it caused a conflict by me being in the military. So my boss come to me one day and he said, "Hey, if you're going to continue in the military one of two things are going to happen, either you're going to have to let the club go and you come do your thing in the military or you're going to have to let the military go and do your thing in the club." He gave me that ultimatum and at the time I had been president about a year. And he said, "I'm serious because it's causing a conflict out here on the base, so you need to do something." At that time I decided, I said well, I was too far gone in my military career to give it up, so I decided to leave [00:11:00] the club. After I left the club -- I left the club with the clubhouse, turned the presidency back over to Harvey Wilson, I had 35 cases of beer, about 18 cases of Short Dog wine, and the lease was paid for six months, and I turned it over to Harvey Wilson, and six months after I turned it over to him, the club disbanded. So that was the end of the Black Fox and it never got restarted again. Let me go back to the beginning when I got here and I asked people how did the club get its name, the Black Fox. To my surprised it was centered around one of the people that had been in the military that had retired. His

name was Daddy Baker and he kept calling himself the Silver Fox because [00:12:00] he was all grey-headed and everything. But they had another club down on Baseline that was called the Silver Fox, so we couldn't name the club the Silver Fox without a conflict. We haggled -- they haggled over it because it was the Black Fox when I got here -- they haggled over the name and they came up with the name Black Fox because he was Black and he called himself the Fox, so that's how they got the name. I want to just show you what the back of our clothes looked like. That was our logo for the motorcycle club. The Black Fox as you can see the name across there, motorcycle club, and it was in Southern California San Bernardino, and this is the image that we came up for the Black Fox. [00:13:00] Okay. Now I wanted to go back and talk about that because that was very important to me to make sure we keep that -- but six months after I turned the club back over to Harvey Wilson, the club disbanded, and I kept my colors. There were several other Black motorcycle clubs that started up after we disbanded. One of them was the Magic Wheels, another was the Brothers of the Sun, in Victorville which was a club that was real close to us was called the Chosen Few. So we used to every weekend we would be on the road somewhere in Southern California or Central California visiting a motorcycle club and just partying heavy form. [00:14:00] That's how I got to see most of California was on my motorcycle. I had a 750 Honda and it was all tricked out and it had an extended front end on it and everything and I really enjoyed traveling over California. My experience with the club was good. We had run-ins with some of the motorcycle clubs that called themselves motorcycle gangs, but the experiences were not that bad. They taught us some things that we needed to know to survive and it was great meeting those people. We met some members of the Hells Angels, we met some members of the Vargos, and we met some members of the Desert Rats, and we met some members of the Mongrels, and so

all of those people used to come visit us at our clubhouse, and drink beer,
[00:15:00] and party, and talk about things. Other than that, I had to get on with my
military career, so I had to cut the motorcycle club loose. That's about the extent of
my interview.

Q: Thank you so much, Mr. Joe Mays, for this interview part two.

JOSEPH MAYS: You're quite welcome.

End of Interview:

[00:15:25]