



*Special Collections/Archives Department
John B. Coleman Library
Prairie View A&M University*

UA0097

The General Julius W. Becton Collection

Complied by Anna Gaffey, May 2013

Revised by Evelyn Davis, January 2024

The General Julius W. Becton Collection Finding Aid

Collection Overview

Creator: Julius W. Becton

Title: The PVAMU Principals and Presidents Collection: General Julius W. Becton

Dates: 1943-1998

Quantity: 0.25 Linear Feet (5 folders)

Abstract: The Julius W. Becton Papers include biographical materials, correspondence, news clippings, printed materials, and writings relating to the tenure of the fifth president of Prairie View A & M University.

Identification: UA0097

Use Restrictions: Written permission must be obtained from the Special Collections/ Archives Department and all relevant rights holders before publishing quotations, excerpts, or images from any materials in this collection.

Language: The materials are in English.

Repository: Prairie View A&M University

Biographical Note: Julius Wesley Becton (born June 29, 1926) is a retired United States Army Lieutenant General, an educator and administrator who served as the fifth president of Prairie View A & M University. His career has included service in various public service roles such as Director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the United States Agency for International Development (US AID) and Director of the FEMA under President Ronald Reagan. He also served as Superintendent of the Washington, D.C. public school system.

Julius W. Becton was born June 29, 1926 in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania to Julius Wesley and Rose Banks Becton. In December 1943, he joined the Army Air Corps Enlisted Reserves, and after graduating high school in 1944, he joined the active army. Though the Army was segregated in 1944, Officer Candidate School was not. Julius Becton and sixteen other African American candidates completed OCS in 1945 and were commissioned as second lieutenants. Shortly after his commissioning, Lt. Becton was assigned to serve in the Philippines. Upon his return from the Philippines, Becton left the army and attended Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. In 1948, after President Harry S. Truman had desegregated the military, Becton was accepted for active duty once again and remained in the Army until 1983. During that period he saw combat duty in Korean and Vietnam. He

was also stationed in Germany, the Philippines, France, the Southwest Pacific, and Japan during his service. In 1972, Becton was promoted to Brigadier General. As an army General he commanded the 1st Cavalry Division, the United States Army Operations Test and Evaluation Agency, and the VII U.S. Corps. With that appointment in 1978, General Becton was the first African American officer to command a Corps in the U.S. Army.

In 1960, Becton earned a Bachelor's degree in mathematics from Prairie View A&M University in Texas. He received a Master's in economics from the University of Maryland in 1967. He also graduated from the United States Command and General Staff College, the Armed Forces Staff College, and the National War College. Becton retired from the U.S. Army in 1983, after nearly 40 years of service. However, his public service career was far from over. From 1984 to 1985, he served as the Director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the United States Agency for International Development (US AID). He then served as the Director of the FEMA from 1985 to 1989 under President Ronald Reagan.

Becton was the fifth president of Prairie View A&M University. President Becton was the first graduate of Prairie View A&M University to attain star rank in the military. During his tenure, President Becton took steps to improve fiscal operations. He also oversaw the reaffirmation team visit by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and the College of Nursing received a full eight-year accreditation from the National League of Nursing. On August 31, 1994, General Becton retired as President with the distinction of Honorary Doctorate approved by the Board of Regents, Texas A&M University System. In 1996, he became the Superintendent of the Washington D.C. public school system.

Becton now serves as a director to several corporations, academic institutions, and associations. His many honors include being named several times by Ebony magazine as "One of the 100 Most Influential Blacks in America," and he has also received the Distinguished Service Award Association of the U.S. Army and the Boy Scouts of America's Silver Beaver Award. His autobiography, *Becton: Autobiography of a Soldier and Public Servant* was published in 2008 by Naval Institute Press. Former PVAMU President Lieutenant General Julius W. Becton, Jr., USA (Ret.) has been inducted into the National Defense University National Hall of Fame. The prestigious honor is given to those American alumni who exhibit an exceptional record of service as well as achievement meriting special recognition. After retiring from the U.S. Army with nearly 40 years of service, Becton enjoyed a full career in public service. He has served as director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the U.S. Agency for International Development and director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. He went on to serve as the fifth president of PVAMU from 1989 to 1994.

Sources: None.

Scope and Contents Note: The Julius W. Becton Papers consist of biographical material, correspondence, news clippings, printed materials, and writings by and relating to General Becton and his tenure as President of Prairie View A & M University. **Biographical material** consists of biographical sketches and contact information. **Correspondence** consists of outgoing memos and a mailer for Julius Becton's farewell banquet. **News Clippings** are made up of photocopied newspaper and magazine articles. **Printed materials** include programs and various printed materials, and **Writings** consist of published and unpublished written materials by General Becton.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged by Correspondence, news clippings, and printed materials chronologically. Writings are divided into published and unpublished subseries and are arranged alphabetically by title. Biographical material is not arranged.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

The General Julius W. Becton Collection, UA0097, Special Collections/Archives Department, John B. Coleman Library, Prairie View A&M University

Related Material: Related material may be found in the Special Collections/Archives Department Vertical Files, or in other unprocessed University Archives collections from specific university departments. Ask a member of the SCAD staff for assistance.

Index Terms

African American educators.

Becton, Julius W. (Julius Wesley), 1926-

Educators – United States.

Prairie View Normal and Industrial College (Prairie View, TX)

Prairie View (TX).

Inventory

Box #	Folder #	Title/Description	Date	Location
Series 1: Biographical material, 1981, undated				
2	1	Miscellaneous files (3 items)	Undated	R2/C2/R5
2	2	Change of address and directory card	1981	
Series Two: Correspondence, 1990-1994, Undated				
2	3	Untitled letter	Undated	R2/C2/R5
2	4	Untitled letters (14 items)	1990-1994	R2/C2/R5
Series Three: News Clippings, 1943-1998				

2	5	Miscellaneous newspaper clippings (37 items)	1943-1998	R2/C2/R5
Series Four: Printed Materials, 1990-1994, Undated				
2	6	Houston Chronicle quotation, undated	Undated	R2/C2/R5
2	7	University staff briefing program	1990	R2/C2/R5
2	8	New student orientation handout	1990	R2/C2/R5
2	9	Ecumenical vesper service program	1990	R2/C2/R5
2	10	Becton inauguration program	1990	R2/C2/R5
2	11	Farewell scholarship celebration program	1994	R2/C2/R5
Series Five: Writings, 1938-1951, Undated				
2	12	Commencement ceremony remarks	1983	R2/C2/R5
2	13	Prairie View: On the Hill	1991	R2/C2/R5
2	14	State of the University address	1992	R2/C2/R5