



The Golden Thirteen: Recollections of the First Black Naval Officers (Bluejacket Paperback Series)

Paul Stillwell, Colin L. Powell

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In January 1944 sixteen black enlisted men gathered at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station in Illinois to begin a cram course that would turn them into the U.S. Navy's first African-American officers on active duty. The men believed they could set back the course of racial justice if they failed and banded together so all would succeed. Despite the demanding pace, all sixteen passed the course. Twelve were commissioned as ensigns and a thirteenth was made a warrant officer. Years later these pioneers came to be known as the Golden Thirteen, but at the outset they were treated more as pariahs than pioneers. Often denied the privileges and respect routinely accorded white naval officers, they were given menial assignments unworthy of their abilities and training. Yet despite this discrimination, these inspirational young men broke new ground and opened the door for generations to come.

In 1986, oral historian Paul Stillwell began recording the memories of the eight surviving members of the Golden Thirteen. Later he interviewed three white officers who served with and supported the efforts of the men during World War II. This book collects the stories of those eleven men. Introduced by Colin L. Powell, they tell in dramatic fashion what it was like to be a black American.

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