

CARL BRASHEAR (1931-)

Carl Brashear was the first Black-American master diver in the U.S. Navy, despite a crippling injury.

He was born in Toneyville, Kentucky, on January 19, 1931, to a sharecropper family and raised in Sonora, Kentucky. Master Chief Brashear joined the Navy in February 1948 at the age of 17.

Confined to the galley, like most Blacks and Filipinos of the era, Master Chief Brashear decided to make deep-sea diving his profession, which was unheard of for a Black-American sailor at the time. He was admitted to the Navy Dive School and overcame a seventh grade education to have a notable career as a navy diver.

In 1966, Carl lost half his left leg during a diving mission. Through remarkable courage and force of will, he convinced Navy officers that he was capable of performing his duty, even as an amputee. Not only did he continue to dive, but he also went on to earn his master diver certification in 1970, becoming the first black master diver in Naval history. In 1998, he became one of only seven enlisted men to be enshrined in the naval archives.

Master Chief Brashear's heroic life story and indomitable spirit became the basis for the 2000 film, "Men of Honor".

