



John Henry Chaney, Sr.

Served in the Marine Corps during World War II

Chaney was drafted to serve in the Marine Corps in 1943. While white Marines were trained either at Parris Island, South Carolina, or San Diego, California, Montford Point in North Carolina was built in the middle of a thick pine forest for its first set of black recruits in 1941. It was run by white officers; the first black officer would not exist until 1945. Montford Point would be home to 19,168 black Marine recruits during from 1942 to 1949, nearly 13,000 of which would fight in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Montford Point was a segregated facility, split by railroad tracks that delineated white and black sides. If a black soldier wanted to visit the storehouses on the white side, he needed a white chaperone.

Chaney was assigned to the 8th Field Regiment Attached to the 5th Marine Division. The 8th Field Regiment unit, which was formed after President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order in 1941 requiring all branches of the military to accept people of color into their ranks. Blacks had served in nearly every American conflict before then, but the Marine Corps was the last branch of the military to officially allow them into its ranks. During the war, Chaney transported ammunition as part of an all-black unit. He witnessed the hoisting of the flag at Iwo Jima, but never fought in combat. He was honorably discharged on November 23, 1945.

On June 28, 2012, 368 former Montford Point Marines - including Chaney - received the Congressional Gold Medal from several members of congress and leaders of the Marine Corps, who honored the men for their part in desegregating the Marine Corps and the military as a whole. In addition to being decorated with various ribbons and medals for duties performed, Chaney was awarded two Iwo Jima Campaign Medal, National Defense Medal, Sharp Shooter Medal and was honored at a Montgomery County event on September 19th, 2012, that recognized county residents who served in WWII.

Chaney was born and raised in Montgomery County. He lived in Boyds, Maryland until 2018 when he relocated to Orlando, Florida with his daughter Mary Chaney-Johnson. He is an honorary member of The American Legion, Oviedo Post 243 in Seminole County and received a Proclamation from City of Oviedo, Seminole County.