

February 23, 1979

Lt. Gen. Frank E. Petersen

became the first Black promoted to the rank of brigadier general in the Marines on this day. A native of Topeka, KS, Petersen holds bachelor's and master's degrees from George Washington University. He is also a graduate of the National War College. At the age of 20, Petersen was the first Black to be named a naval aviator in the Marine Corps. He was also the first African-American to command a fighter squadron, a fighter air group, an air wing, and a major base. He spent 38 years in the Marine Corps, retiring in 1988 as commanding general of the Marine Development Education Command in Quantico, VA. Petersen currently serves as the chairman-elect of the board of directors of the national Marrow Donor program and as a board member of the Educational Credit Management Corporation. In 1999, he released his autobiography, *Into the Tiger's Jaw: America's First Black Marine Aviator*.

February 24, 1964-

Muhammad Ali,

considered the greatest heavyweight champion of all time, won his first world heavyweight championship title by defeating Sonny Liston during a fight on this day in Miami. Cassius Marcellus Clay, 22, as he was then known, had irked many sensibilities with his flamboyant commentary on his looks and boxing prowess. But he left his critics dumbfounded when he took his trainer Drew (Bundini) Brown's advice to "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee," taunting and battering then-champion Liston. After six rounds, Liston couldn't answer the bell for the seventh, and Ali became the 22nd world heavyweight champion.