

# ALEX HALEY

(1921-1992)



*Photo Courtesy of the United States Coast Guard Archives*

Alex Haley was born in Ithaca, New York. His father, Simon Haley, was working on a graduate degree at Cornell University's School of Agriculture. Following Simon's graduation, the family moved around throughout the South, relocating to whatever college or university Simon could find a teaching position at. In 1937, Alex Haley enrolled in Elizabeth City Teachers College. Following graduation, he enlisted in the Coast Guard. While serving, Haley's skill as a writer quickly became

apparent. The service created a new rank for him in recognition of his skills, Chief Journalist, which he retained until he left the Coast Guard.

Haley first gained widespread national attention when he collaborated with Malcolm X on *"The Autobiography of Malcolm X"* published in 1965. The work was a worldwide success. Haley followed up on that success with the book *"Roots,"* which traced the story of his family's coming to America and how the struggles they faced were mirrored by similar struggles millions of other black Americans faced and overcame. The book was turned into a mini-series that is still one of the top-rated television events of all time.

Haley continued writing and lecturing for the rest of his life, inspiring a generation of Americans to look into their own genealogy and consider how our past has impacted today's society.