

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with George Haley

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Haley, George Williford Boyce, 1925-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with George Haley,
Dates:	May 20, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:50:23).
Abstract:	Federal government appointee George Haley (1925 - 2015) served as a Kansas State Senator, was appointed Chief Counsel of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration as well as Chairman of the Postal Rate Commission, and was Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia in West Africa. Haley was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 20, 2004, in Silver Spring, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_054
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Attorney George Williford Boyce Haley was born on August 28, 1925, in Henning, Tennessee. He grew up on a number of college campuses, as both his parents were university professors. As a young boy living at Alabama A&M at Normal, Alabama, he met Dr. George Washington Carver. While a student at J. C. Corbin High School in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, he played the french horn with the Arkansas AM&N College marching band. In 1943 Haley moved to Bordentown, New Jersey and graduated from Bordentown High School, a military boarding school. Two months after graduation, he was drafted into the U.S. Military and served for the next three years.

From 1946 until 1949, Haley attended Morehouse College with Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays as president, and fellow students Martin Luther King, Jr., and Lerone Bennett. After receiving his bachelor of arts degree, he accepted a challenge from his father and became the third African American student admitted to the University of Arkansas Law School where he was one of five African Americans at the school.

While at Arkansas, he endured horrendous acts of racism, including having a bag of urine thrown in his face and facing daily verbal insults. At the end of his first year he scored the highest marks on his final examinations and by the end of his second year he was writing articles for the *Law Review*. He received his law degree in 1952, becoming the second African American to graduate from Arkansas.

After receiving his law degree, he joined the firm of Stevens Jackson in Kansas, who are often referred to as the architects of the landmark civil rights case, *Brown v. the Board of Education*. While still working in private practice, Haley served as Deputy City Attorney from 1954-1964. He then embarked on a political career and was elected as a Kansas State Senator. He held that post from 1964-1968.

In 1966, Haley unsuccessfully ran for the U.S. Congress; nonetheless he still landed in Washington, D.C. In 1969, Haley was appointed Chief Counsel of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (Federal Transit

Administration) by President Richard Nixon. From 1973-1976, he served as Associate Director for Equal Employment Opportunity at the United States Information Agency (USIA). Upon leaving USIA, he became a partner in the law firm of Obermayer, Rebmann, Maxwell and Hippel of Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. before establishing his own firm in 1981. In 1986, he made another unsuccessful bid for the U.S. Senate in Maryland.

In 1990, President George H. W. Bush appointed Haley as Chairman of the Postal Rate Commission, where he served for the next eight years, after being re-commissioned by President Bill Clinton. In April of 1998, President Clinton named him U.S. Ambassador to The Gambia in West Africa, where he served until 2001. Haley also served as the executor of the estate of Pulitzer Prize winning novelist Alex Haley, his brother.

Haley passed away on May 13, 2015 at his home in Silver Spring, Maryland. He was 89.

George Haley was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 20, 2004.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with George Haley was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on May 20, 2004, in Silver Spring, Maryland, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Federal government appointee George Haley (1925 - 2015) served as a Kansas State Senator, was appointed Chief Counsel of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration as well as Chairman of the Postal Rate Commission, and was Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia in West Africa.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Haley, George Williford Boyce, 1925-

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Haley, George Williford Boyce, 1925---Interviews

African American lawyers--Interviews

African American state legislators--Kansas--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Lawyer

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with George Haley, May 20, 2004. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with George Haley, Section A2004_054_001_001, TRT: 0:30:33 ?

George Haley was born on August 28, 1925 in Henning, Tennessee. His mother, Bertha Palmer Haley, born in Henning, was a musician who attended Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee, where she met Simon Haley, Haley's father. Haley's father was born in Savannah, Tennessee to sharecroppers and was encouraged by his mother and teachers to attend college. Haley's parents married upon his father's return from World War I. Haley's father attended Cornell University while his mother attended The School of Music at Ithaca College in New York. They moved to Normal, Alabama where Haley's father taught at State Agricultural and Mechanical Institute for Negroes. Haley's mother died in 1932, and his father remarried shortly after. Haley remembers stories of his father's childhood, Christmas celebrations, and visiting his maternal grandmother in Henning during the summer with his brothers Julius and Alex. Haley remembers his relatives in Henning telling stories of ancestors from North Carolina who settled in Tennessee.

African American lawyers--Interviews.

African American state legislators--Kansas--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with George Haley, Section A2004_054_001_002, TRT: 0:30:56 ?

George Haley spent his childhood on many college campuses, moving often for his father's and stepmother's teaching careers. As a child he enjoyed watching college sports and going to concerts on campus. While attending P. W. Moore Junior-Senior High School in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, he forged a friendship with HistoryMaker Gerald Lamb that resumed when they reconnected over twenty years later. Haley remembers his music teacher at J. M. Corbin High School on the campus of Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical & Normal College in Pine Bluff and playing in the college band as a high school student. He spent his summers in Henning, Tennessee with his maternal grandmother, listening to the family stories that inspired his brother, Alex Haley's genealogical research. He attended New Hope CME Church in Henning, to which his maternal grandfather donated over a thousand dollars in his will and subsequently had an elementary school named after him. Haley describes the origin of his and his siblings' names.

Video Oral History Interview with George Haley, Section A2004_054_001_003, TRT: 0:29:48 ?

George Haley completed sixth grade at P. W. Moore Junior-Senior High School in Elizabeth City, North Carolina then attended J. C. Corbin High School, a college preparatory school on the campus of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, until ninth grade. He then moved to Memphis, Tennessee where he attended Booker T. Washington High School for two years. His father's work in Bordentown, New Jersey during the onset of World War II led to Haley attending Bordentown School, a military academy, for his senior year. After graduating in 1943, Haley was drafted into the U.S. Military and served for three

years. In 1946 he entered Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. Morehouse President Dr. Benjamin Mays deeply influenced Haley and many of his peers, including Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Haley still recalls and recites his words. After graduating in 1949, he decided to attend the University of Arkansas Law School in Fayetteville, Arkansas, a former white school, to advance race relations.

Video Oral History Interview with George Haley, Section A2004_054_001_004, TRT: 0:27:56 ?

George Haley was one of the first few African American student to enter the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arkansas after Silas Hunt and Jackie Lamond Shropshire first undertook its integration. During his time at the University of Arkansas Law School, Haley was restricted from sitting in the library or using the public restrooms and experienced racist incidents, including having urine thrown on him; he also saw attitudes change in a positive way due to his and other African American students' presence. Haley was a dedicated staff member of the prestigious Arkansas Law Review. After graduating in 1952, he was invited to become a partner at the law firm of Stevens, Jackson and Davis, then became Deputy City Attorney for the City of Kansas City, Kansas in 1954. During that time he assisted on the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 1954 case. Haley reflects upon the impact of Brown v. Board of Education and recounts a story about his maternal grandmother that demonstrates changing moral standards.

Video Oral History Interview with George Haley, Section A2004_054_001_005, TRT: 0:30:27 ?

George Haley was elected Kansas State Senator in 1964. After losing his seat in 1968, President Richard Nixon appointed him Chief Counsel to the Urban Mass Transportation Administration in Washington, D.C. In 1973, Haley began working for the U.S. Information Agency, first as assistant then general counsel and congressional liaison, before leaving in 1976. He resumed his legal career, working at a private law firm until beginning his own practice in 1981. In 1984, he became an advisor, and later delegate, to UNESCO. After losing the race for U.S. Senate in 1986, Haley was appointed by President George H.W. Bush to the U.S. Postal Rate Commission where he served in different capacities until 1998. President Bill Clinton appointed him U.S. Ambassador to The Gambia. After his ambassadorship ended in 2001, Haley remained involved with educational projects in The Gambia. Haley recalls the response to his brother, Alex Haley's article, 'George Haley: The Man Who Wouldn't Quit,' and groundbreaking book, 'Roots.'

Video Oral History Interview with George Haley, Section A2004_054_001_006, TRT: 0:20:43 ?

George Haley, in his capacity as executor of the Alex Haley estate, developed several projects, including a potential Alex Haley car racing team and others related to the 'Roots' series. At the time of the interview in 2004, he had recently completed a series of lectures in Africa, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, on the theme 'From Kunta Kinte to Colin Powell' which highlighted achievements in African American history. Haley hoped to foster economic and cultural ties between African Americans and Africans. He talks about the influence of 'Roots' on the popularity of genealogical research among both African Americans and white people. He describes how he would like to be remembered, reflects upon the importance of history and narrates his photographs.