

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Delores Brisbon

---

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Brisbon, Delores, 1933-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Delores Brisbon,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 8, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:43:51).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Healthcare executive Delores Brisbon (1933 - ) served as the Director of Planning and Systems, and COO of the University of Pennsylvania Hospital. Brisbon later formed Brisbon and Associates. Brisbon was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 8, 2005, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_042
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Hospital CEO Delores Flynn Brisbon was born February 12, 1933, in Jacksonville, Florida, to Felton A. and Inez Ellis Flynn. Brisbon attended Douglas Anderson Elementary School and graduated salutatorian from Stanton High School in 1950. Brisbon earned her B.S. degree in nursing from Tuskegee University in 1954; later, in 1974, she was awarded a sociology degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

From 1954 to 1956, Brisbon worked as assistant to the director of nursing services and as a clinical instructor for Tuskegee University's John Andrew Hospital. In 1957, Brisbon became director of Nursing Services at Dillard University's Flint Goodridge Hospital. Moving back to Tuskegee, Brisbon married James Brisbon; the couple then moved to Philadelphia where she became head nurse at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital in 1959. Brisbon was promoted to supervisor of medical nursing in 1962, and in 1974, became staff person to the executive director. In 1975, Brisbon was hired as director of planning and systems where she led the construction of the \$46 million Silverstein Pavilion and the \$116 million Founders Pavilion. In 1980, Brisbon was appointed chief operating officer, managing a budget of over \$300 million; she guided a multi-million dollar construction project before retiring after her husband's illness in 1986. In 1987, Brisbon formed Brisbon and Associates, a healthcare consulting firm which she operated until 2003.

Active in the Philadelphia community, Brisbon was responsible for negotiations with the University of Pennsylvania that resulted in the relocation and construction of the Walnut Child Care Center. Brisbon also served on the boards of Eastern University; Mercy Health System; Eastern Baptist Seminary; and Community College of Philadelphia. Brisbon founded and served as chairperson of the board of the Mother Bethel Foundation for which she has raised a million dollars. In addition to her professional activities, Brisbon has raised two children.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Delores Brisbon was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 8, 2005, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Healthcare executive Delores Brisbon (1933 - ) served as the Director of Planning and Systems, and COO of the University of Pennsylvania Hospital. Brisbon later formed Brisbon and Associates.

---

## 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:

Brisbon, Delores, 1933-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brisbon, Delores, 1933---Interviews

---

African American women executives--Interviews

---

Hospital administrators--Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## Occupations:

Healthcare Executive

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

---

## 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 Delores Brisbon, February 8, 2005. 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 Delores Brisbon, Section A2005\_042\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:58 ?

Delores Brisbon was born on April 12, 1933 in Jacksonville, Florida. Brisbon's mother, Inez Willis Flynn, was born on September 1, 1900 in Blackville, South Carolina. She was trained as a school teacher, but became a devoted stay-at-home mother who loved to cook. Brisbon's father, Welton Flynn, was born on

January 3, 1895 in Williston, South Carolina. He moved around to find work as a common laborer and janitor before settling in Jacksonville. Brisbon was the sixth of eight children. In Jacksonville, she lived in an oppressively segregated neighborhood and attended Douglas Anderson Elementary School and Stanton High School, both of which she graduated from early. Brisbon was a shy, studious child who was very active at Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church, where she was deeply influenced by its pastor and a lady who was her mentor and trained her in teaching Sunday school. With the financial support of two of her older brothers, she attended Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama.

African American women executives--Interviews.

Hospital administrators--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Delores Brisbon, Section A2005\_042\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:43 ?

Delores Brisbon was the salutatorian of her graduating class at Stanton High School in Jacksonville, Florida in 1950. At Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, she studied nursing and was enriched by the legacy of the institution and its prominent faculty. Brisbon watched the burning of the chapel on Tuskegee's campus after it was set on fire by the Klu Klux Klan, destroying precious artifacts in the process. She admired the grace and fortitude of Dean Charles G. Gomillion during the incident. Due to the dean of the School of Nursing, Lillian Holland Harvey, not wanting students trained in the segregated hospitals of the South, Brisbon gained clinical experience at Morrisania Hospital in New York, New York. She also trained at Tuskegee Veteran Administration Medical Center. After graduating in 1954, Brisbon taught operating room nursing at John A. Andrew Hospital in Tuskegee, then served as the director of nursing at Flint-Goodridge Hospital in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Video Oral History Interview with Delores Brisbon, Section A2005\_042\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:22 ?

Delores Brisbon and James Brisbon married on December 15, 1954. After starting as head nurse at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1959, Brisbon was eventually promoted to chief operating officer in 1979. Although she encountered racism from some of the staff, she was respected for her calm, but authoritative demeanor and her expertise as a nurse. She was the first African American woman to serve as COO of such an elite hospital. After retiring in 1986, a colleague asked for her business expertise and together they founded Brisbon & Associates, a healthcare consulting firm. The business serviced clients such as Temple University and the William Penn Foundation in Philadelphia and never had to market its services, relying only on referrals. Both of her children worked for her business for many years. In 2002, she closed Brisbon & Associates to devote full-time care to her late husband, who was suffering from Alzheimer's. Brisbon shares advice for a lasting marriage.

Video Oral History Interview with Delores Brisbon, Section A2005\_042\_001\_004, TRT: 0:16:48 ?

Delores Brisbon established The Mother Bethel foundation to raise funds renovating and expanding the historic Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She recruited HistoryMaker Ossie Davis to record a video about the church's history to show potential investors. Among her many volunteer positions, she has served as governor of Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in St. Davids, Pennsylvania and as a member on the Mercy Health Systems board. At the time of the interview, Brisbon planned to raise awareness about the impact of Alzheimer's and resources available to those diagnosed with the disease and their loved ones. Although her mother died in 1975, her father lived to see her successful career at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. Brisbon reflects upon her life,

legacy, and how she would like to be remembered. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community and concludes by narrating her photographs.