

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Canady-Davis, Alexa, 1950-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis,
Dates:	October 16, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:45:09).
Abstract:	Neurosurgeon Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis (1950 -) was the first African American female neurosurgeon in the United States. Canady-Davis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 16, 2006, in Pensacola, Florida. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_120
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dr. Alexa Irene Canady-Davis was the first African American woman in the United States to become a neurosurgeon. Canady-Davis was born to Elizabeth Hortense (Golden) Canady and Dr. Clinton Canady, Jr., a dentist, on November 7, 1950, in Lansing, Michigan. After graduating from Lansing High School in 1967, Canady-Davis received her B.S. degree from the University of Michigan in 1971 and her M.D. degree (cum laude) from the College of Medicine at the University of Michigan in 1975. Between 1975 and 1976, Canady-Davis completed an internship at Yale-New Haven Hospital. She next trained as a resident in neurosurgery at the University of Minnesota between 1976 and 1981.

After a fellowship in pediatric surgery at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia between 1981 and 1982, Canady-Davis returned home to Michigan and joined the Neurosurgery Department at Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital. In 1983, she was hired at Children's Hospital of Michigan where she later became Chief of Neurosurgery in 1987. Before that, Canady-Davis was certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery in 1984. In 1985, she began teaching at Wayne State University School of Medicine as a Clinical Instructor of Neurosurgery. In 1997, she was elevated to Professor of Neurosurgery at Wayne's School of Medicine. In 1988, she married George Davis, a U.S. Navy recruiter. From 1987 to 2001, Canady-Davis was Chief of Neurosurgery at Children's Hospital of Michigan. Her areas of expertise are cranio-facial abnormalities, hydrocephalus, tumors of the brain, and congenital spine abnormalities.

Upon retirement from the position of Chief of Neurosurgery in 2001, Canady-Davis moved to Pensacola, Florida with her husband, also retired—a city that he had lived in during part of his career in the Navy. But, after several years of retirement, Canady-Davis was lured back to surgery as a consultant and to a part-time surgical practice at the Sacred Heart Medical Group Hospital.

Canady-Davis has received numerous professional recognitions, including being named Woman of the Year by the American Women's Medical Association in 1993, as well as being inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of

Fame. She mentors young people by speaking at high schools in the Pensacola area, hoping that her accomplishments are helping to inspire the dreams of younger generations.

Canady-Davis was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* October 16, 2006.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis was conducted by Robert Hayden on October 16, 2006, in Pensacola, Florida, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Neurosurgeon Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis (1950 -) was the first African American female neurosurgeon in the United States.

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:

Canady-Davis, Alexa, 1950-

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Canady-Davis, Alexa, 1950- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Neurosurgeon

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 Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis, October 16, 2006. 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 Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis, Section A2006_120_001_001, TRT: 0:28:39 ?

Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis was born on November 7, 1950 in Lansing, Michigan to Hortense Golden Canady and Clinton Canady, Jr. Canady-Davis' paternal

grandparents lived in Detroit, where they worked in the automobile plants. Her father, who was inspired by his friend Waldo Cain, studied dentistry at Nashville's Meharry Medical College with financial support from his father. Canady-Davis' mother was born in Chicago in 1927, and grew up there and in Jackson, Tennessee, where her own mother, Essie Mae Atwater Golden Perry, taught at Lane College. After Canady-Davis' parents married, they settled in Lansing, Michigan, where her father practiced dentistry, and her mother served on the school board, and later became national president of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Canady-Davis attended Lansing's Kalamazoo Street School, and then Pleasant Grove Elementary School when her family moved to the suburbs. After her suburban home was annexed into Lansing, she attended the Lewton School, which was in a wealthy neighborhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis, Section A2006_120_001_002, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis enjoyed reading biographies as a student at the Lewton School and West Junior High School in Lansing, Michigan. Also an excellent mathematics student, she was placed ahead several grades, and studied trigonometry alongside her older brother, Clinton Canady III. Canady-Davis graduated from Everett High School in 1967, and spent the summer in Eastern Europe on a trip with Switzerland's American School. She wanted to attend Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but was rejected, and enrolled instead at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. There, Canady-Davis joined the debate team, the newspaper staff and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. In her senior year, she changed her major from mathematics to pre-medical studies. Canady-Davis attended the University of Michigan's medical school from 1971 to 1975, and specialized in neuroscience. In 1975, she went on to an internship at Yale New Haven Hospital, and later to her residency at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities in Minneapolis.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis, Section A2006_120_001_003, TRT: 0:27:50 ?

Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis entered the field of pediatric neurosurgery through a fellowship at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania with Luis Schut, who became her mentor. She recalls operating on a craniopharyngioma tumor and on the daughter of C. Vivian Stringer while in Philadelphia. In 1982, Canady-Davis became a pediatric neurosurgeon at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Michigan, where she often operated on adult neurosurgery cases as well. She moved to Children's Hospital of Michigan in order to focus solely on pediatric care in 1983; and, by the late 1980s, became the chief of neurosurgery. In 1988, she married George Davis, a U.S. Navy corpsman. During Canady-Davis' career in surgery, she taught at Wayne State University School of Medicine; patented a valve device; presided over the Michigan Association of Neurological Surgeons; and consulted for the Food and Drug Administration. She retired in 2001, and moved to Pensacola, Florida, where she began mentoring the local middle school students.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis, Section A2006_120_001_004, TRT: 0:19:30 ?

Dr. Alexa Canady-Davis retired from her position as chief of neurosurgery at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit in 2001. She then moved with her husband, U.S. Navy veteran George Davis, to Pensacola, Florida, where he had been stationed during his military service. In Pensacola, Canady-Davis took up reading and bridge, and became active with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's teen mentorship program, Dr. Betty Shabazz Delta Academy. She was convinced to

return to work part time at Sacred Heart Hospital Pensacola, a regional hospital that treats patients from northern Florida and Alabama, as the hospital could not treat pediatric neurosurgery cases until she began working there. Canady-Davis describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, especially the underrepresentation of African Americans in the medical profession. She also reflects upon her life; career; and how she would like to be remembered.