

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lois Fisher

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Fisher, Lois, 1927-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lois Fisher,
Dates:	March 10, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:47:41).
Abstract:	Nightclub owner and singer Lois Fisher (1927 -) and her spouse, Lessly “Count” Fisher, owned and operated the Carousel Club in Indianapolis, Indiana, and the Chateau de Count and Eve in Indianapolis, Indiana. As a singer she toured with Harold King, Big Joe Turner and Cecil Gant in the 1940s. Fisher was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 10, 2007, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_083
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Lois Eve Fisher, also known as “Eve Rene,” was born Lois Eve Greene on September 5, 1927, in Thibodaux, Louisiana. Fisher’s parents were Georgia Milton Greene, a teacher, and Allen Earl Greene, a contractor. Growing up, Fisher attended Valena C. Jones Elementary School (where she was a classmate of Andrew and Walter Young) in New Orleans; she also attended McDonald’s #6 School and graduated from Washington High School in Thibodaux in 1944. Encouraged by her uncle, Adam Lambert, Fisher began performing “Stardust” and other popular songs as a teen; she later received voice training at Southern University.

In 1945, Fisher left Southern University and found work as a clerk at the United States Army’s Camp LaShay. Soon after, Fisher was singing with the Paul Barbrien Band. Fisher then auditioned with Duke Ellington and toured with Winonie Harris, Tampa Kid, Harold King, Big Joe Turner and Cecil Gant. In 1946, Fisher left the road when she briefly married and settled in Indianapolis, Indiana. In 1951, she met and toured with Lessly “Count” Fisher; around the same time, she also worked in Cincinnati, Covington, and Indianapolis, where she cut a record, *Love is Strange*. Eventually Fisher reunited with Count Fisher in Indianapolis; the couple later married and together established the Carousel Club. Over the years, the Fishers developed a loyal audience by featuring entertainers like Rodney Dangerfield, June Christie, Leroy Vinegar, Freddie Hubbard, George Kirby, Redd Foxx, Moms Mabley, Jimmy McGriff, Jack McDuff, John Coltrane and James Brown. From 1963 to 1965, the couple operated the Chateau de Count and Eve near the Indiana State Capitol; there, they showcased Roy Hamilton, Lula Reed and Motown.

In 1966, Fisher and her husband moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where they played at the London House. Fisher earned her B.A. degree in music and art in 1985 from Grand Valley College; from 1989 to 1997, she worked for the clerk of courts in Grand Rapids.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lois Fisher was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 10, 2007, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Nightclub owner and singer Lois Fisher (1927 -) and her spouse, Lessly "Count" Fisher, owned and operated the Carousel Club in Indianapolis, Indiana, and the Chateau de Count and Eve in Indianapolis, Indiana. As a singer she toured with Harold King, Big Joe Turner and Cecil Gant in the 1940s.

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:

Fisher, Lois, 1927-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Fisher, Lois, 1927- --Interviews

African American businesspeople--Interviews

African American singers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Nightclub Owner

Singer

HistoryMakers® Category:

EntertainmentMakers|MusicMakers

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 Lois Fisher, March 10, 2007. 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 Lois Fisher, Section A2007_083_001_001, TRT: 0:28:28 ?

Lois Fisher was born on September 5, 1927 in Thibodaux, Louisiana to Georgia Milton Greene and Allen Greene. Her paternal great-grandmother, a slave in Virginia, married an Irish man and moved to Plaquemine, Louisiana, where they raised Fisher's paternal grandmother. Fisher's maternal grandmother and great uncle voyaged with privateer Jean Lafitte from Portugal to New Orleans, Louisiana, where her great-uncle became a music instructor and violin maker. Fisher's maternal grandmother died when Fisher's mother was nine years old, leaving her mother in the care of Fisher's maternal great-grandmother, Elmira Milton. Fisher's mother grew up in a nursing home owned by her great aunt, and trained as a teacher at Xavier University of Louisiana. While teaching in Plaquemine, she met Fisher's father, and they married. When Fisher was three years old, her parents separated, and she was sent to live with her fair skinned maternal great-grandmother and Aunt Owinda Warren Tapplette, rather than her darker skinned mother.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

African American singers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Lois Fisher, Section A2007_083_001_002, TRT: 0:28:23 ?

Lois Fisher was raised by her maternal aunt, Owinda Warren Tapplette, and great-grandmother, Elmira Milton, in New Orleans, Louisiana. There, she listened to Joe Louis' boxing matches on the radio, and sometimes accompanied her father, Allen Greene, to his painting jobs. Fisher began her education at Valena C. Jones Elementary School with civil rights leader Andrew Young, who was once caught playing cards in school with Fisher's brother. When Fisher was nine years old, her great-grandmother died, and she moved to live with her mother, Georgia Milton Greene, and stepfather in Thibodaux, Louisiana. There, she sang at Calvary United Methodist Church, and was encouraged to pursue music by a teacher at C.M. Washington High School. Fisher was rarely permitted to leave the house, except to sing with her great uncle, music instructor Adam Lambert, at white country clubs. Each year, Fisher spent six months with her aunt in New Orleans, where she attended McDonogh No. 6 and McDonogh No. 35 Senior High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Lois Fisher, Section A2007_083_001_003, TRT: 0:29:12 ?

Lois Fisher graduated from C.M. Washington High School in Thibodaux, Louisiana, and matriculated at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she studied voice training. Student conduct rules were strict, and male students were barred from the women's dormitories. During the summers, Fisher worked as a clerk at Camp Harahan in New Orleans, Louisiana. There, she met her first husband, soldier Ralph Trotter. He encouraged her to sing for the camp, and helped her find a manager. She worked with Paul Barbarin's band until 1946, when she left for Washington, D.C. There, she secured an audition with Duke Ellington, but rumors about the treatment of his female vocalists led her to turn it down. Instead, Fisher sang in Richmond, Virginia; Nashville, Tennessee; and Indianapolis, Indiana. There, while performing at George's Bar, she met bandleader Lessly "Count" Fisher, whom she later married. Fisher then returned to New Orleans to live with her mother and children.

Video Oral History Interview with Lois Fisher, Section A2007_083_001_004, TRT: 0:29:18 ?

Lois Fisher continued her singing career in segregated New Orleans, Louisiana. She performed at the all-white Dew Drop Inn, where she was required to wait in a closet during intermissions on account of her race. Eventually, Fisher and pianist Fats Domino were hired to perform at the Marcello family syndicate's Joy Lounge. When Peter Marcello began making advances on her, she refused and quit the job. He prevented Fisher from finding work in New Orleans, so she

began commuting to sing in Biloxi, Mississippi. After Marcello followed her there, Fisher moved with her children to Cincinnati, Ohio, joining her husband, Ralph Trotter, who had moved earlier to escape Marcello's threats. She sang in Cincinnati and Coventon, Kentucky, and recorded with pianist Bill Doggett. Then, Fisher began performing in Indianapolis, where bandleaders Dizzie Gillespie and Lionel Hampton were emerging artists. She joined Lessly "Count" Fisher's band; and, together, they purchased and operated the Carousel Club.

Video Oral History Interview with Lois Fisher, Section A2007_083_001_005, TRT: 0:29:28 ?

Lois Fisher and her husband, Lessly "Count" Fisher, owned the Carousel Club in Indianapolis, Indiana, which hosted comedy acts like Redd Foxx, Rodney Dangerfield and Moms Mabley; and jazz musicians like John Coltrane and Elvin Jones. They also performed on telethons with celebrities like Lorne Greene and Frances Farmer. In 1963, Fisher and her husband opened the Chateau de Count et Eve in Indianapolis, where they featured singers Roy Hamilton and Lula Reed, and comedian Flip Wilson. After her husband's mother fell ill, he and Fisher sold the nightclub, and moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan. They performed for a time at the London House, but left after being criticized for attracting black patrons. Fisher's husband went on to become one of Grand Rapids' first African American police officers. In 1984, Fisher earned an art degree from Grand Valley State College in Allendale, Michigan. She also briefly worked at the welfare department in Indianapolis, where she moved to be near her daughter.

Video Oral History Interview with Lois Fisher, Section A2007_083_001_006, TRT: 0:22:52 ?

Lois Fisher moved in the 1980s to Idlewild, Michigan, where her husband, Lessly "Count" Fisher, had been appointed the chief of police. She commuted from Idlewild to Allendale, Michigan to attend Grand Valley State College, and earned a degree in art. There were few opportunities for Fisher to perform in the area, so she retired from singing. She eventually returned to Grand Rapids, Michigan. Fisher had eight children, three of whom were musicians, including Rodney Trotter, who sang with George Clinton in Parliament-Funkadelic; guitarist Reginald Trotter; and drummer Lessly Fisher, Jr., who performed on 'The Tonight Show With Jay Leno.' Fisher also reflects upon her hopes and concerns for the African American community, her legacy and how she would like to be remembered. She concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.