

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Coy Payne

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## 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>	Payne, Coy, 1929-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Coy Payne,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 11, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:07:00).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Mayor The Honorable Coy Payne (1929 - 2019) was the first African American mayor elected in the State of Arizona. Payne served two terms as Mayor of Chandler, from 1990 to 1994, and oversaw the Sun Belt's economic and population boom. Payne was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 11, 2007, in Phoenix, Arizona. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_203
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Mayor Coy C. Payne was born May 22, 1929 in Sulphur Springs, Texas to Scott Payne and Virgie May Stribling, cotton sharecroppers. The second of nine children, Payne often labored with his family in the fields throughout his childhood and adolescence. When he was twelve, Payne's family moved to Chandler, where Payne attended a segregated middle school in Mesa and Chandler before attending segregated Carver High School in Phoenix, an hour long bus ride away. After dropping out of Arizona State University in 1949, Payne was drafted by the United State Army and served in Korea. After he returned, he met and married Willie Woods, a community activist and certified accountant. Returning to school on the G.I. Bill, he received his B. S. degree in education from Arizona State University in 1958.

Payne started his career by teaching third grade in Chandler. He would go on to work in Chandler area schools for thirty-one years, teaching and serving as Assistant Principal of Chandler Junior High School until he retired from education in 1989. Out of college, Payne became active in the community by joining the Chandler Human Relations Committee and working to improve race relations in the area. From there, he was appointed to various other city organizations, including the chairmanship of the Chandler Housing Authority. In 1980, at the advice of the Mayor of Chandler, Payne ran for and won an at large seat on the Chandler City Council, serving two terms from 1982 to 1989. In 1990, Payne won a landslide victory in the mayoral election, becoming the first African American to serve as mayor in the State of Arizona.

Payne served two terms as Mayor of Chandler, from 1990 to 1994, and successfully oversaw the huge economic and population boom that occurred across the "Sun Belt." He and his wife continue to be involved in community government and service. A middle school was named in their honor.

Payne passed away on December 8, 2019.

The Honorable Coy Payne was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 11, 2007.

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Coy Payne was conducted by Jacques Lesure on July 11, 2007, in Phoenix, Arizona, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Mayor The Honorable Coy Payne (1929 - 2019) was the first African American mayor elected in the State of Arizona. Payne served two terms as Mayor of Chandler, from 1990 to 1994, and oversaw the Sun Belt's economic and population boom.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

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

### Persons:

Payne, Coy, 1929-

Lesure, Jacques (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Payne, Coy, 1929- --Interviews

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African American politicians--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Mayor

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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## 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 The Honorable Coy Payne, July 11, 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Coy Payne, Section A2007\_203\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

The Honorable Coy Payne was born on May 22, 1929 in Sulphur Springs, Texas to Vergie Mae Stribling Payne and Scott Payne. Payne's father was born in

1903, and left school in the fifth grade to assist his parents, who were sharecroppers in Sulphur Springs. There, Payne's maternal grandparents, Lewis Stribling and Sylvia Stribling, owned a syrup mill, which they allowed the community to use; and raised fruit crops to sell at the local market and in other towns, like Greenville, Texas. Payne was also influenced by his maternal grandfather's Baptist faith. Payne's mother was born in 1907, and worked as a domestic while rearing nine children, including Payne. When Payne was a boy, his family moved frequently, as his father sought better housing in the Sulphur Springs community. There, he remembers celebrating Juneteenth; learning to write from his older sister; and visiting his maternal great-grandfather, who died when Payne was seven years old.

African American families--Texas.

Racism.

Juneteenth--Texas.

African American children--Texas.

African American farmers--Texas.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Coy Payne, Section A2007\_203\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

The Honorable Coy Payne's father, Scott Payne, served on a segregated school board in the Sulphur Springs, Texas. During his tenure, the board built a new school for the African American community, but it was destroyed by an arsonist. From that time, Payne's father began planning to leave Texas. Payne and his family briefly lived with his paternal grandparents in Commerce, Texas, and then moved to Eloy, Arizona, where they picked cotton for several months, before relocating to Chandler, Arizona. There, Payne lived with his family in the all-black community on Saragosa Street. Because the Chandler School District barred African American students, Payne completed the sixth grade at the segregated Booker T. Washington Elementary School in Mesa, Arizona. When the segregated Ocotillo Elementary School opened in Chandler, Payne continued his education there, until matriculating to high school. At twelve years old, Payne was baptized at Chandler's Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church.

African American families--Arizona.

Chandler (Ariz.).

Segregation--Arizona.

African Americans--Migrations--Texas.

Racism--Arizona.

African Americans--Social conditions--Texas.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Coy Payne, Section A2007\_203\_001\_003, TRT: 0:27:50 ?

The Honorable Coy Payne completed the seventh and eighth grades at the all-black Ocotillo Elementary School in Chandler, Arizona. His teacher, Robie Perdue Robinson, helped him join a Boy Scout troop in the Eastlake Park neighborhood of Phoenix, Arizona. From 1945, Payne continued his education at George Washington Carver High School, a segregated, college preparatory school in Phoenix, where he was two years older than his peers. There, Principal W.A. Robinson required the faculty to have master's degrees in the subjects that they taught. During the summers, Payne worked for his maternal grandparents, Sylvia Stribling and Lewis Stribling, who owned a ranch in California. Upon graduating in 1949, he matriculated at the majority white Arizona State College in Tempe, Arizona, where he studied English and history. Payne was drafted

into the U.S. Army in 1951; and, after completing basic training at Camp Roberts in California, was deployed to serve in the Korean War.

African Americans--Education--Arizona.

Arizona State University--Students.

Korean War, 1950-1953--Participation, African American.

Education, Secondary--Arizona.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Coy Payne, Section A2007\_203\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

The Honorable Coy Payne served in an integrated U.S. Army platoon during the Korean War. After arriving in Busan, Korea, he traveled by train to a replacement center; and, from there, journeyed to a field artillery outfit with another serviceman assigned to the area. Upon reaching the outfit, which was in the midst of a fire mission, Payne dug a hole to sleep in; and, the next day, departed for his base camp. There, he learned that his company was on patrol, and spent his first night on the front line alone. When his platoon returned, Payne was assigned to the position of automatic rifleman. He remembers his company's efforts to overtake a hill occupied by Chinese forces. After the battle, he transported the body of his deceased friend to their platoon's base camp. Payne was discharged in 1953, and returned to the United States. Initially unable to find longterm employment, he began working as a custodian at the Williams Air Force Base in Arizona. He married Willie Woods Payne in 1954.

Korean War, 1950-1953--Participation, African American.

Veterans--Psychology.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Coy Payne, Section A2007\_203\_001\_005, TRT: 0:10:50 ?

The Honorable Coy Payne narrates his photographs.

Photos