

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with John Hooker

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hooker, John, 1948-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John Hooker,
Dates:	February 22, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:13:28).
Abstract:	Energy executive John Hooker (1948 -) was a senior vice president of Commonwealth Edison. He also helped found the Exelon African American Members Association. Hooker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 22, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_024
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Senior vice president of Commonwealth Edison, John Timothy Hooker was born on November 25, 1948 in Chicago, Illinois. The son of Mississippi immigrants Arthur and Rosa Horton Hooker, Hooker grew up in Chicago's Lawndale community located on the West Side. He attended Theodore Hertz Elementary School, Hess Upper Grade Center and Farragut High School. At Hess Upper Grade Center, Hooker was inspired by civil rights activist Al Raby and teacher Warner Sanders. Graduating from Farragut High School in 1966, Hooker got married and was hired by Commonwealth Edison that same year. Starting in the company mailroom at ComEd, Hooker learned as much as possible about the company. Hooker rose to clerk typist, to time keeper, to material clerk, and by 1974, he was promoted to human relations representative. Then in 1976, Hooker began working in the marketing department where he was promoted to director of marketing for Bolingbrook, Illinois and the western suburbs in 1984. In 1987, he became the ComEd liaison to the late Chicago Mayor Harold Washington and City Hall. Hooker went on to earn his B.S. degree from Chicago State University in 1990 and helped found the Exelon African American Members Association (EAAMA). Hooker served as area manager for ComEd in the western Chicago suburbs and director of external affairs. Later, in 1995, Hooker was named director of governmental affairs and influenced the passage of the Illinois Consumer Choice Law of 1997. Hooker was promoted to vice president of property management for Exelon Energy Delivery, and in 2000, he became an officer of the company. In 2004, Hooker was appointed senior vice president of Commonwealth Edison.

A 1994 participant in Leadership Greater Chicago, Hooker serves on several boards including: the Chicago State University Foundation, Peoples Consumer Cooperative, the Safer Foundation, Junior Achievement and the African American Initiative. Hooker is a member of the American Association of Blacks in Energy. He is also a member of Chicago University's Business Hall of Fame Committee and is involved in the Chicago Public School's Youth Motivation program.

Hooker lives in Chicago, Illinois with his wife, Kim. They have three adult children.

Hooker was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 22, 2008.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with John Hooker was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 22, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Energy executive John Hooker (1948 -) was a senior vice president of Commonwealth Edison. He also helped found the Exelon African American Members Association.

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:

Hooker, John, 1948-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Hooker, John, 1948- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Commonwealth Edison Company

Occupations:

Energy Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 John Hooker, February 22, 2008. 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 John Hooker, Section A2008_024_001_001, TRT: 0:30:22 ?

John Hooker was born on November 15, 1948 in Chicago, Illinois to Rosa Whorton Hooker and Arthur Hooker. His maternal grandfather was the child of

an Irish immigrant and a Native American woman; and raised thirteen children, including Hooker's mother, on a farm in Lexington, Mississippi. There, Hooker's mother completed high school, although her education was often interrupted by farm work. Hooker's father was also raised in Lexington, where his family were sharecroppers; and was educated through the eighth grade. After marrying, Hooker's parents moved in search of employment opportunities to Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood. His father left the family when Hooker was young, and his mother refused to accept public assistance, working instead as a seamstress to provide for Hooker and his ten siblings. Gangs were prevalent in the area during Hooker's childhood, but Hooker's mother was a strong disciplinarian, and prevented Hooker and his siblings from participating in criminal activity.

Video Oral History Interview with John Hooker, Section A2008_024_001_002, TRT: 0:31:09 ?

John Hooker grew up in the North Lawndale section of Chicago, Illinois. There, he and his ten siblings attended a Pentecostal church with their mother, Rosa Whorton Hooker; and were forbidden from listening to secular music at home. Hooker enjoyed baseball and Western movies, and frequented the Better Boys Foundation and the Archie Moore Boxing Gym, which were located in North Lawndale. He also helped support the family by working a paper route and selling Jet magazine. Hooker attended Chicago's Theodore Herzl Elementary School until the sixth grade, when he graduated to the Julius H. Hess Upper Grade Center. There, his teachers included civil rights activist Albert Raby and sportscaster Warner Saunders. Hooker went on to attend Farragut High School, where he experienced integrated education for the first time. In 1963, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to Chicago's West Side, and Hooker began to learn about the Civil Rights Movement and segregation from his mother, who grew up in the South.

Video Oral History Interview with John Hooker, Section A2008_024_001_003, TRT: 0:29:07 ?

John Hooker attended Farragut High School in Chicago, Illinois. During his junior year, he began working part-time at Sears, Roebuck and Co. He aspired to attend college, but could not afford to do so, and decided to enter the workforce after graduating in 1966. Hooker was recruited to join the Commonwealth Edison Company (ComEd) by Bill Ferrell, a human resources representative and one of the first African American executives within the company. Hooker was hired to work in the ComEd mailroom, where he quickly became familiar with the structure of the company. He had studied typing in high school, and was soon promoted to clerk-typist. Later, Hooker was promoted to timekeeper, despite nepotism within the company and coworkers who tried to disqualify him from the position. He learned to operate effectively without help from his colleagues; and, four years later, was promoted to material clerk. In 1971, Hooker began attending college courses at night.

Video Oral History Interview with John Hooker, Section A2008_024_001_004, TRT: 0:29:28 ?

John Hooker attended night classes at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, while working at the Commonwealth Edison Company (ComEd) and raising his eighteen month old daughter, Felicia Hooker. After his first wife passed away, Hooker moved in with his mother, Rosa Whorton Hooker, and helped pay off her debt by working an additional part-time job. At ComEd, Hooker excelled as a material clerk by using his breaks to study supply terms. He was then promoted to a human resources position in 1974. By this time, he had nearly earned a marketing degree, having completed credits at Roosevelt University and Chicago State University. He was promoted in 1976 to ComEd's marketing department, where he advocated for customers from Chicago's West Side.

Hooker continued to advance; and, after six years, became the head of the marketing department at the ComEd facility in Bolingbrook, Illinois. In the 1980s, Hooker was selected as the company liaison to Chicago Mayor Harold Washington's administration.

Video Oral History Interview with John Hooker, Section A2008_024_001_005, TRT: 0:29:19 ?

John Hooker served as the Commonwealth Edison Company's (ComEd) liaison to the City of Chicago during Mayor Harold Washington's administration. He completed negotiations for a franchise agreement; and then moved to the western suburbs, where he became an area manager. In 1990, Hooker partnered with ComEd's other black executives to found the Exelon African American Members Association, an affinity group that encouraged mentorship and communication between the company's black leaders. The group was initially met with criticism, but later inspired the creation of other affinity groups. Hooker went on to work in public relations as ComEd's director of external affairs for the Chicago area. In 1994, he married Kim Hooker; and became a fellow of Leadership Greater Chicago, where he networked with other executives. From 1996, Hooker served as ComEd's director of governmental affairs, and worked with ComEd executive Frank Clark to pass a bill that deregulated the electrical utility markets in the State of Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with John Hooker, Section A2008_024_001_006, TRT: 0:30:36 ?

John Hooker served as the director of government affairs at the Commonwealth Edison Company (ComEd). In this role, he lobbied to deregulate the electric utilities industry in the State of Illinois, arguing that deregulation would improve the quality of ComEd's services and lower prices for consumers. Illinois legislators agreed, and passed the Electric Service Customer Choice and Rate Relief Law in 1997. In the early 2000s, Hooker became an officer of the company, and was named the vice president of legislative and government affairs for ComEd. He continued working with the state government, including State Senate President Emil Jones, Jr. Hooker also served on the boards of the People's Consumer Co-Operative, Inc., Chicago State University and the Safer Foundation. He talks about his three children, and his hopes and concerns for the African American community. Hooker also reflects upon his career, life, legacy and how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with John Hooker, Section A2008_024_001_007, TRT: 0:13:27 ?

John Hooker narrates his photographs.