

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Alma Dodd

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Dodd, Alma, 1944-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Alma Dodd,
Dates:	November 21, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:12:55).
Abstract:	Insurance executive Alma Dodd (1944 -) worked twenty-one years in Chicago public schools, ending as a district supervisor. Then she became part owner and operator of Dodd's Insurance Agency, recognized as the best in the state from 1990 to 1994. Dodd was a charter member of the Windy City Chapter of The Links, Inc., and has been honored for her services to the community. Dodd was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 21, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_139
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Insurance executive Alma Leola Dodd was born on September 5, 1944, in Chicago, Illinois, to George and Velma Roberts. Dodd received her B.S. degree in education from Northern Illinois University in 1966. She received her M.S. degree and completed her post graduate work in education with a focus on special education, learning disabilities, and administration & supervision from Chicago State University in 1974.

Dodd began her career in education as a teacher at Woodson North Elementary School in Chicago, where she taught from 1967 through 1970. She then worked as a language arts teacher at Dixon Elementary School in Chicago from 1970 to 1975. From 1975 to 1979, she worked at Victor F. Lawson School, Center for Learning Disabilities as a teacher of reading. From 1979 to 1981, she taught reading at Gillespie Elementary School, Center for Learning Disabilities. Dodd then worked as an instructional intervention teacher for the District 17 Learning Disabilities Program in Chicago from 1981 to 1985. Dodd was promoted to District 17 Supervisor, a position in which she coordinated Chapter One Programs, and supervised 42 Chapter One programs in area schools between 1985 and 1988.

In 1988, Dodd began a new career in the insurance industry when she became part owner and operator of an Allstate Insurance Company in Calumet City, Illinois. From 1990 through 1994, her agency was recognized as the Top Allstate Insurance Agency in Illinois. Dodd is a charter member of the Windy City Chapter of The Links, Inc., and is a former chapter president. Dodd also serves on the board of directors for ETA Creative Arts Foundation, Black Creativity, The HistoryMakers, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Dodd has been honored as an outstanding member of the community. The organization 100 Black Men of Chicago, Inc., honored Dodd for her exemplary support of youth. In addition, *Chicago Magazine* recognized her as an

outstanding leader in the Chicago community as part of the Marshall Field's Project Imagine.

Dodd is married to fellow insurance agent Louis Dodd. They have three children: Robert Dodd, Kimberly Yelverton, and Courtney Dodd.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Alma Dodd was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 21, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Insurance executive Alma Dodd (1944 -) worked twenty-one years in Chicago public schools, ending as a district supervisor. Then she became part owner and operator of Dodd's Insurance Agency, recognized as the best in the state from 1990 to 1994. Dodd was a charter member of the Windy City Chapter of The Links, Inc., and has been honored for her services to the community.

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:

Dodd, Alma, 1944-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Dodd, Alma, 1944- --Interviews

Women insurance executives--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

African American women executives--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

African American women teachers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Allstate Insurance Company

Occupations:

Insurance 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 Alma Dodd, November 21, 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 Alma Dodd, Section A2008_139_001_001, TRT: 0:29:41 ?

Alma Dodd was born on September 5, 1944 in Chicago, Illinois to Velma Morrison Young and George Roberts, Jr. Her maternal great-grandmother, Mary Smith Morrison, lived to be 110 years old. With Dodd's maternal great-grandfather, Abraham Morrison, she raised eight children in Cairo, Illinois, including Dodd's maternal grandfather, Joseph Morrison. He worked for the U.S. Post Office Department, and married her maternal grandmother, Aileen Morrison, who had Seminole ancestry. They raised their family in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood, where Dodd's maternal grandfather was an active community and church leader. Her paternal grandparents, Molly Roberts and George Roberts, Sr., moved from Missouri to Chicago, where her father worked at the Ward Baking Company. He married Dodd's mother, who worked at the Campbell Soup Company, and together they had four children. Dodd's father died in 1945, a year after she was born. Dodd also describes her siblings and stepfather, Jack Young.

Women insurance executives--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American women executives--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American women teachers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Alma Dodd, Section A2008_139_001_002, TRT: 0:29:02 ?

Alma Dodd grew up in the Ida B. Wells Homes on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois, and was active in the South Side YWCA programs. She began her education at the Oakland School, where she was inspired by teacher William Hayes Finch's discipline and care for his students. She then attended the Holy Angels Catholic School from the fifth to the eighth grades; and, in 1958, entered St. Elizabeth Catholic School. After her mother remarried, Dodd's family moved to the Chatham neighborhood. She transferred to the all-black Wendell Phillips High School, where she was mentored by teacher Henry Grant, who encouraged her to join the school newspaper, and to be the first in her family to attend college. Dodd graduated high school with honors in 1962, and received a scholarship to Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois. There, she was denied housing in town, and white students refused to room with her. Dodd pledged the only black sorority on campus, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and became its president.

Video Oral History Interview with Alma Dodd, Section A2008_139_001_003, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Alma Dodd graduated from college in 1966, and was assigned to teach at Woodson North Elementary School, where her former teacher, William Hayes Finch, was the principal. There, gang activity was common, but Dodd established a rapport with her students, and mentored them through graduation. She transferred to Arthur Dixon Elementary School, where she taught language arts, ran the school newspaper and helped her students fundraise for trips. While there, Dodd's student teacher was art patron Joan Crisler, and reporter Cheryl Burton was among her students. In 1974, Dodd earned a master's degree in education from Chicago State University, and obtained a position at the Victor

F. Lawson School's reading clinic. She later taught children with learning disabilities at Gillespie Elementary School. From 1981 to 1985, she was an instructional intervention teacher, and determined students' eligibility for special education. Dodd also recalls working on the campaign for Harold Washington's election as mayor of Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Alma Dodd, Section A2008_139_001_004, TRT: 0:29:09 ?

Alma Dodd first met her husband, Louis Dodd, as a teacher at Woodson North Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois, and they married in 1973. Following a teacher's strike in 1987, Dodd left her position as an administrative supervisor, and qualified as an insurance agent. With her husband, she founded the independent Dodd's Insurance Agency, and served clients in Chicago and Calumet City, Illinois. After establishing the agency, Dodd opened a hospitality business with her husband and their daughter, Courtney Dodd. Their venues included the Amber Inn and the Pearl's Place restaurant. After 1987, Dodd became more active in The Links, Incorporated, where she served as the national program coordinator. In this role, she designed the agenda for over 270 chapters, and provided financing and support. She also developed a basket-weaving project for Rwandan women, and built schools in South Africa. Dodd also talks about the Chicago Public Schools, and the role of life insurance in the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Alma Dodd, Section A2008_139_001_005, TRT: 0:15:18 ?

Alma Dodd talks about her role on the community board at the Northern Trust Corporation, and her activism in the Chatham community of Chicago, Illinois. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and reflects upon her life, legacy and family. Dodd concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.