

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Evan Forde

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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>	Forde, Evan B.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Evan Forde,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 3, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:14:51).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Oceanographer Evan Forde (1952 - ) became an oceanographer at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (AOML) in Miami, Florida in 1973. He was the first African American scientist to participate in research dives aboard a submersible and remains one of only a handful of African American oceanographers in the United States. Forde was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 3, 2013, in Key Biscayne, Florida. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_137
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Oceanographer Evan B. Forde was born on May 11, 1952 in Miami, Florida and received his early education in the Miami Public School System. Forde earned his B.A. degree in geology with an oceanography specialty and his M.A. degree in marine geology and geophysics from Columbia University in the City of New York.

In 1973, Forde became an oceanographer at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (AOML) in Miami, Florida. He was the first African American scientist to participate in research dives aboard a submersible and completed successful dive expeditions in several submarine canyons utilizing three of these vessels. Forde remains one of only a handful of African American oceanographers in the United States. Forde has conducted research in a number of oceanographic and meteorological disciplines and has been a versatile pioneer in scientific research. His current research includes using satellite sensors to observe and analyze atmospheric conditions related to improving hurricane forecasting and improving intensity prediction models.

Forde has also worked extensively in the area of science education. He created and taught a graduate level course on tropical meteorology for the University of Miami's INSTAR program for seven years. Forde also created and teaches an oceanography course for middle school students called Oceanographic Curriculum Empowering Achievement in Natural Sciences (OCEANS) that has been featured in nationally distributed periodicals and web sites. He originated and authored the "Science Corner" in *Ebony Jr!* magazine for three years, and later created a Severe Weather Poster for NOAA that was distributed nationally to fifty thousand teachers.

Forde has spoken to more than fifty thousand students during career days and other presentations. Forde has also been the subject of the museum exhibits, including the Great Explorations section of the Staten Island Children's

Museum, and has been featured in numerous periodicals, text books and many other publications on prominent African American scientists. Forde has also served as a PTA President, Scoutmaster, youth basketball coach, Sunday School and youth church teacher, church webmaster, neighborhood Crime Watch chairman, official photographer for the South Florida Special Olympics and in numerous other roles that have fostered youth and improved his community.

Forde has a host of career and civic awards that include being named NOAA's Environmental Research Laboratories EEO Outstanding Employee, South Florida's Federal Employee of the Year (Service to the Community), a U.S. Congressional Commendation, NOAA Research Employee of the Year and in 2009 he had days named in his honor by both the City of North Miami and Miami-Dade County, Florida. In 2010, the Miami-Dade County School Board issued a proclamation honoring Forde's contributions to students citing his ongoing efforts to enhance public education. Forde was named as the recipient of the NOAA Administrator (Under Secretary of Commerce) Award for 2011 for his outstanding communication of NOAA science, sharing the joy of science with students, and helping to foster a science-literate society.

Evan B. Forde was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 3, 2013.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Evan Forde was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 3, 2013, in Key Biscayne, Florida, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Oceanographer Evan Forde (1952 - ) became an oceanographer at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (AOML) in Miami, Florida in 1973. He was the first African American scientist to participate in research dives aboard a submersible and remains one of only a handful of African American oceanographers in the United States.

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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:

Forde, Evan B.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Forde, Evan B.--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:

Oceanographer

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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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 Evan Forde, June 3, 2013. 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 Evan Forde, Section A2013\_137\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:29 ?

Evan Forde describes his family background. His mother, Margaret Carey Forde, was born in Miami, Florida on April 4th, 1930. Her father was born in Eleuthera, the Bahamas. Samuel James Evan Forde the Second, Forde's father, was born April 17th, 1927 in Green Coves, Florida. His father was born in Barbados and moved to the United States, becoming one of the first African American physicians in Florida. Because his grandfather left his grandmother, Forde's father had to drop out of high school to help support the family. He enlisted in the Army during World War II and afterwards was able to attend and graduate from Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida. Forde's father worked as a surgical technician and later as a teacher in order to support his family. Forde discusses his parents' personalities and remarks that he takes after his father the most.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Evan Forde, Section A2013\_137\_001\_002, TRT: 2:30:53 ?

Evan Forde describes his earliest childhood memory. He talks about his sibling, his older sister Bernadette and younger brother Kevin. Forde had a younger sister named Valerie but she died from a traumatic brain injury when he was young. His father, Samuel James Evan Forde the Second, was very involved in the community and known as Mr. Wizard because of his vast knowledge. As a child Forde felt deserted whenever his mother left him, causing him to have behavioral issues. Forde talks about church and faith growing up. He remembers when he received his first "A," which was for spelling in the sixth grade. Being a member in the Boy Scouts of America inspired Forde to join the junior high band and play the trumpet. Forde soon was the best trumpet player in the band, the result of his hard work.

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Video Oral History Interview with Evan Forde, Section A2013\_137\_001\_003, TRT: 3:30:01 ?

Evan Forde talks about his father's, Samuel James Evan Forde, positions at North Dade Junior-Senior High School in Bunch Park, Florida, where he served as the head of the science department, the athletic director, and as the business manager. He describes his accomplishments during summer he spent at Camp Sebring in Avon Park, Florida, as a Boy Scout. Forde attended the primarily

white Carol City High School in Miami Gardens, Florida two years after integration of the school. In 1968 Forde was seriously burned when his house caught on fire and the experience influenced him to quit band and join the football team. Although Forde did not play in many games because he had trouble learning the plays, he was a strong player on the scout team and received several offers of football scholarships by the time he graduated from high school.

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Video Oral History Interview with Evan Forde, Section A2013\_137\_001\_004, TRT: 4:32:02 ?

Evan Forde talks about the difficulties he had with a teacher and counselor at his high school. Forde's interest in oceanography started in a high school course on environmental oceanography. Forde graduated from high school in 1970 and was accepted into Columbia University in New York, New York. His first semester at Columbia University Forde was which placed on academic probation due to poor grades, but he soon recovered. During his junior year Forde obtained a summer job at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Miami, Florida. Forde remembers the geology course he took with Dr. John Sanders which sparked his interest in geology. After graduating from Columbia University in 1974, Forde received a phone call from Dr. John Sanders and was accepted into the graduate program for geology at Columbia University on the spot.

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Video Oral History Interview with Evan Forde, Section A2013\_137\_001\_005, TRT: 5:30:34 ?

Evan Forde talks about receiving his master's degree in 1976 from Columbia University in New York. After completing his qualifying exam, a professor challenged Forde's degree because he had chosen to answer questions outside of his concentration of marine geology and geophysics. However, his advisor, Dr. John Sanders, talked to the department and Forde received his degree. Forde's master's thesis on the mapping of submarine canyons and landslides off the coast of Maryland which led to the canceling of oil drilling in the area. The supervisor of the vessel he was on, 'The Researcher,' took credit for his discovery. Forde describes how his efforts to be recognized for his work were unsuccessful and the care he took in writing his next paper, which was nominated for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Paper of the Year. In 1979, Forde conducted research aboard a submersible vessel, being the first African American to do so.

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Video Oral History Interview with Evan Forde, Section A2013\_137\_001\_006, TRT: 6:29:45 ?

Evan Forde describes his first submersible dive, which was to the Wilmington Submarine Canyon on the Nekton Gamma in 1979. During that dive the line connecting them to the mothership was cut but they were still able to return to the ship. Forde talks about what it is like to be on a submersible dive. On a dive in the submersible Alvin Forde and the pilot were covered by a land slide but managed to maneuver back to the surface. Forde discusses his most memorable discoveries from the submersible dives, which included a new species of anemones, ninety-degree angle canyon walls, and underwater debris flows. Forde also talks about the prevailing theory behind the existence of mid-Atlantic submarine canyons, that they resulted from the breakup of the continent of North America and Europe, which he created.

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Video Oral History Interview with Evan Forde, Section A2013\_137\_001\_007, TRT: 7:29:18 ?

Evan Forde shares how he got involved with science education and talks about the demand for his school visits. He talks about the need for scientists who can communicate in plain language. In 1979 Forde was featured as the most eligible bachelor for 'Ebony Magazine,' which led him to write science-related content for 'Ebony Jr.' in 1980. At the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Forde shifted his research from marine geology and geophysics to satellite remote sensing, where he studied hurricanes and tropical storms. He also became more involved in outreach, eventually resigning as Chairman of the Oceanic and Atmospheric Research Department to focus on public outreach. Forde started the project that produced the NOAA severe weather posters, which were distributed to fifty thousand teachers.

Video Oral History Interview with Evan Forde, Section A2013\_137\_001\_008, TRT: 8:29:18 ?

Evan Forde describes how he created the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration public outreach posters. He produced seventy thousand posters in 2004 on severe weather for school teachers in record time. In 2001 Forde created curricula focused on high school students called OCEANS, Oceanic Curriculum Empowering Achievement in Natural Sciences. He also taught a graduate tropical meteorology course for science teachers through the University of Miami, Miami, Florida's Investigating Nature Through Science Teacher Active Research (INSTAR). Forde talks about the greatest educational speech he had ever given, which was to children at a library. He describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community. Forde also reflects on his life and talks about his family, including the death of his father, Samuel James Evan Forde, and his cousin.

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Video Oral History Interview with Evan Forde, Section A2013\_137\_001\_009, TRT: 9:14:31 ?

Evan Forde discusses his father's, Samuel James Evan Forde, influence on his life and his parent's pride when he graduated from graduate school at Columbia

University in 1976. He talks about his community service in science education and the 2009 Evan Forde Day. He reflects on how he would like to be remembered. Forde also discusses his research on how Saharan air layers affect the formation of hurricanes.

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