

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Edward Smith, Sr.

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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>	Smith, Edward N.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Edward Smith, Sr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 31, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:48:45).
<b>Abstract:</b>	City attorney Edward Smith, Sr. (1930 - ) is the associate attorney for the City of Fort Wayne and chair of the Indiana Black Republican Council. Smith was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 31, 2002, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_135
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Edward Neil Smith was born on September 19, 1930 in Detroit, Michigan. He spent much of his life in Indiana, where he earned an excellent reputation in the legal profession.

After graduating from Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1949, Smith worked as a core maker at American Foundry. He served as a caseworker for the county welfare agency in 1956 and worked his way through Indiana Central College. Majoring in government and business, he received his bachelor's degree in 1958. In 1961, Smith earned a Doctor of Law degree from Indiana University School of Law. That year, he began serving as a deputy attorney general for the State of Indiana. He was appointed deputy prosecutor for Allen County in 1962. The same year, he served as associate attorney for the City of Fort Wayne, Indiana and began practicing privately. He served for 12 years as attorney for the Wayne Township Trustee in Allen County, Indiana.

Smith studied through the University of Nevada in Reno, receiving certification from the National College of Advocacy in advanced civil and criminal trial advocacy in 1975. In 1978, the National Judicial College of the same university accredited him in administrative law procedure. Smith served as the state chairman of the Indiana Black Republican Council. He also served for four years as a board member of the Fort Wayne Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, a committee focused on civil rights, and as director for the Northeast Indiana Radio Reading Service, an organization that aids the blind. He and his wife, Edna, have four adult children: Alice, Linda, Edward and Charles.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Edward Smith, Sr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 31, 2002, in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. City attorney Edward Smith, Sr. (1930 - ) is the associate attorney for the City of Fort Wayne and chair of the Indiana Black Republican Council.

## 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:

Smith, Edward N.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Smith, Edward N.--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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Fort Wayne (Ind.)

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## Occupations:

City Attorney

## HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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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 Edward Smith, Sr., July 31, 2002. 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 Edward Smith, Sr., Section A2002\_135\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Edward Smith describes his upbringing. Smith was born to Alberta Smith in Detroit, Michigan on September 19, 1930. The person suspected to be his father was a lawyer named Neil Edward Soober, which Smith discovered after learning that his high school crush was his sister. Smith was raised by his Aunt Mattie until 1934, when his mother received full custody. He grew up in his wealthy stepfather's home until 1943, when his mother ran off with a taxi driver. After she returned to Detroit, Smith's stepfather divorced Alberta Smith. She and Smith moved to Indianapolis, Indiana around 1944, where they lived in a one-room boarding house. Smith's mother put him out a few months later, and he lived at the local YMCA until he got married around 1946. He enrolled at Crispus Attucks High School in 1944 as a freshman, though he had completed

his freshman year of high school in Detroit. At Crispus Attucks High School, Smith ran track and played football, where he received the nickname “69”.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Smith, Sr., Section A2002\_135\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:30  
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Edward Smith attended Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, where he played football and was nicknamed “69”. Smith got married around 1946 after meeting his wife in Detroit, Michigan. Smith graduated from high school in 1949, and was drafted to serve in the U.S. Army in 1953. In 1955 he enrolled at Indiana Central College, where he played football briefly. Smith graduated in 1958 with his B.S. degree in government and business, and enrolled at the Indiana University School of Law. He graduated with his J.D. degree in 1961, and became the Deputy Attorney General for the State of Indiana. Smith moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1962, where he served as Associate Attorney for the city, and was the city’s only black lawyer. Smith’s being Republican caused some tension between him and Fort Wayne’s black community after his thoughts about Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon B. Johnson were used out of context in the media. Nevertheless, he participated actively in the city’s Civil Rights Movement.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Smith, Sr., Section A2002\_135\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:30  
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In the 1960s, Edward Smith formed the Concerned Citizens for Education in response to school integration issues in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Smith also started a cement company in order to create jobs for African Americans in Fort Wayne, but faced some challenges in managing contract labor. In 1968, Smith co-founded a newspaper entitled “Frost” to create jobs for black journalists, and to print news relevant to the black community. He attempted to franchise the newspaper in the early 1970s in Dayton, Ohio, but was unsuccessful in doing so. The most memorable case Smith tried as a lawyer was a statutory rape case that resulted in a not guilty verdict. Smith’s client, the adult male defendant, and the teenage female plaintiff were married years later. Smith feels that economic inequality, the power of today’s judges, and the impact of the media has led to the decline of the criminal justice system. Smith also comments on his Republican ideology, and the benefits of working at a law firm.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Smith, Sr., Section A2002\_135\_001\_004, TRT: 0:19:00  
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Edward Smith comments on the value of law firms, and practicing law. Though he retired, Smith occasionally tries cases misdemeanor cases. Though his father, Neil Edward Soober, did not acknowledge him until he was twenty-nine years old, Smith tried to build a relationship with him. In addition, he was inspired by his father’s skill as a lawyer. While attending the Indiana University School of Law, Smith only received one “D”. Smith talks about his family and how he would like to be remembered, and reflects on the importance of having roots. Smith closes the interview by sharing his hopes and concerns for the African American community.