

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Donald Miller

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Miller, Donald L., 1932-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Donald Miller,
Dates:	September 17, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:35:30).
Abstract:	Corporate executive and publisher Donald Miller (1932 - 2015) is a former executive at Dow Jones & Company. He has also served as Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense. After his retirement Miller founded Our World News, a high-level African American news publication. Miller was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 17, 2003, in Secaucus, New Jersey. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_214
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Former business executive Donald L. Miller was born in New York on January 10, 1932, to Mamie Johnson and John H. Miller. From 1948 to 1968, Miller served in the U.S. Army, rising to the rank of major and earning the Legion of Merit award in his final year. Near retirement from the Army, Miller lived in Maryland and returned to school, receiving his B.A. from the University of Maryland in 1967.

Due to a recommendation from his mother who worked at Inmont Corporation, Miller was hired to work as a special assistant to the president in the human resources area. Miller then left Inmont to work in that same capacity at Seatrain Shipbuilding, helping recruit African American employees. Miller was then recruited to a senior ranking position as deputy assistant secretary of defense under President Richard Nixon, a position he held from December 1971 to January 1973. In 1973, Miller was honored by the Department of Defense for his work with the Distinguished Civilian Award.

From 1973 to 1978, Miller worked in academia as vice president of personnel and management at Columbia University. He then went on to hold executive positions with a number of companies, including International Paper, Con Edison and Dow Jones & Company, where he served as vice president of employee relations from 1986 until 1995. Following his retirement from Dow Jones, Miller entered the entrepreneurial and publishing world when he started *Our World News* as a high-level African American news publication.

Over the years, Miller has been active with a number of professional organizations, including serving on the board of directors of the Bank of New York and Schering Plough. For twenty years, he was a trustee at Pace University, and since 1981, served as director of the Jackie Robinson Foundation. Miller had been married to his wife, Gail Aileen Wallace, since 1981. They have one child, Lynn Ann, and lived in Las Vegas. Miller and his wife also founded Associated Black Charities in New York.

Donald Miller passed away on August 29, 2015.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Donald Miller was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on September 17, 2003, in Secaucus, New Jersey, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Corporate executive and publisher Donald Miller (1932 - 2015) is a former executive at Dow Jones & Company. He has also served as Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense. After his retirement Miller founded Our World News, a high-level African American news publication.

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:

Miller, Donald L., 1932-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Miller, Donald L., 1932---Interviews

African American executives--Interviews

Authors and publishers--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Dow Jones & Co.

Occupations:

Association Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Donald Miller, September 17, 2003. 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 Donald Miller, Section A2003_214_001_001, TRT: 0:30:25 ?

Donald Miller was born on January 10, 1932 in New York City. His mother, Mamie Rufus Cooper, was born in Jacksonville, Florida. After Miller's maternal grandmother remarried, the family moved to New York. Miller's mother attended Florida A&M University and worked as a teacher before the Great Depression. During World War II, she worked as a riveter in Boeing's Seattle, Washington plant. Miller spent the early years of his life in Harlem, New York before moving to Greenwich, Connecticut around 1937. There, his mother found employment as a domestic for prominent families including businessman J.C. Penney. Miller's mother eventually relocated the family to Harlem's Sugar Hill neighborhood in 1939. Miller describes the African American upper middle-class residents of Sugar Hill such as Jimmy Rushing and Julius Archibald. He even had a chance encounter with Jack Johnson in his apartment building. Miller began school in Greenwich and continued at P.S. 5 and P.S. 186 in New York. Miller narrates his photographs.

African American executives--Interviews.

Authors and publishers--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Miller, Section A2003_214_001_002, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Donald Miller briefly attended school in Greenwich, Connecticut before moving back to New York, New York around 1939. There, he went to elementary school at P.S. 5 and P.S. 186 in Harlem, and he briefly attended the High School of Music and Art. Miller transferred to George Washington High School where he continued to feel a lack of guidance from teachers and counselors. At age fourteen, he joined the 15th Infantry Regiment, a branch of the New York State Guard. Miller joined the U.S. Army two years later in 1948, one year after President Harry Truman ordered the desegregation of the U.S. military. He served as company clerk for Colonel Henry Minton Francis at his first duty station in Kitzingen, Germany. A chance encounter with a classification and assignment specialist convinced Miller to remain in the military. After returning from Korea in 1953, he reenlisted and became a recruiting sergeant. Shortly thereafter, he enrolled in officers' candidate school. Miller graduated at the top of his class in 1956.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Miller, Section A2003_214_001_003, TRT: 0:30:56 ?

Donald Miller was stationed in Germany during the Berlin Airlift from 1948 to 1949. When he returned to the United States in 1950, he became a company first sergeant at the age of eighteen. During the Korean War, he led the 4th Ordnance Battalion as sergeant major. He then served as a recruiting sergeant before enlisting in officers' candidate school and returning to Germany in 1956. Over his twenty year U.S. military career, Miller ascended from private to sergeant major. He also earned his B.A. degree from the University of Maryland. Miller retired from the Army, in 1968 at thirty-six years old, when his request to attend Command and General Staff College was denied. Miller worked as a recruiter and program director for Interchemical Corporation before being named deputy assistant secretary of defense in 1971. Miller talks about the relationship between the U.S. military and U.S. presidential administrations from 1949 through 1969; and, talks about the progress of people of color in the U.S. military.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Miller, Section A2003_214_001_004, TRT: 0:31:16 ?

Donald Miller completed his U.S. Army career with an assignment at the Pentagon and earned a business certificate from Harvard Business School in the late 1960s. In 1968, he began working for Interchemical Corporation as special assistant to the president where he developed equal opportunity and affirmative action programs which achieved limited results. Miller talks about his adjustment to corporate America. In 1970, he became vice president of industrial relations at Seatrain Shipbuilding. Miller left the corporation to serve as deputy assistant secretary of defense where he rewrote the Uniform Code of Military Justice with Curtis Smothers. Miller describes the U.S. military's efforts to address race relations and diversity during the early 1970s; and, recalls incidents when he encountered resistance to the new policies while touring U.S. bases in Europe. Miller recalls a meeting with President Richard Nixon and other black political appointees including HistoryMaker Jewel LaFontant-Mankarious.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Miller, Section A2003_214_001_005, TRT: 0:31:16 ?

Donald Miller began volunteering with Greater New York Fund in the late 1960s. He was honored with the U.S. Department of Defense Distinguished Civilian Service Award before retiring as deputy assistant secretary of defense in 1973. One of Miller's career highlights was a meeting between six black colonels and the secretaries of the U.S. Army and Air Force. In 1973, he became vice president for personnel management at Columbia University. He automated key functions of the human resources department and worked on labor contracts between healthcare unions and university institutional partners. Miller negotiated with Jesse Olson, a labor organizer with the District 1199 healthcare workers union, during the Harlem Hospital labor disputes of the mid-1970s. Miller ultimately implemented a retirement plan for contract workers at the hospital. He worked for Columbia University until 1978 when he left to briefly work for International Paper. Miller then became vice president of personnel for Con Edison in New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Miller, Section A2003_214_001_006, TRT: 0:29:56 ?

Donald Miller joined the board of BNY Mellon bank in the mid-1970s. The opportunity arose through his volunteer work on the board of the Greater New York Fund. Miller remained with the Fund until 1982 when he formed Associated Black Charities with Arthur Barnes and HistoryMaker Reverend Calvin Pressley. As a United Way member organization, ABC helped their community-based partners receive funding. ABC competed with the Black United Fund for influence in the New York City philanthropic sector. Miller worked as vice president of personnel for Con Edison in New York, New York during the early 1980s. He oversaw over twenty thousand employees and the corporation's recruitment functions. Miller left the board of BNY Mellon in 2002 to join the board of Schering-Plough, producer of pharmaceuticals such as Claritin. He talks about the responsibilities of being on a corporate board. Miller married his wife, Gail Miller, in 1981.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Miller, Section A2003_214_001_007, TRT: 0:30:26 ?

Donald Miller worked for Dow Jones & Company as vice president of employee relations from 1986 through 1995. In 1992, he organized the company's first black entrepreneurship conference and continued to advocate for greater recognition of black businesses by the New York business community. Miller proposed the creation of a black-oriented news publication to Dow Jones. After the company withdrew funds, Miller decided to pursue the idea independently. He developed prototypes for Our World News, but ultimately could not generate enough funding to sustain the project past 1997. Miller ascribes much of his

career success to the support of his family. He considers the success of affirmative action programs in the American business and political sectors, the history of blacks in the U.S. military and the future of Associated Black Charities. Miller concludes by talking about his middle name and reflecting upon his legacy.