

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with James L. Jackson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jackson, James L., 1926-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with James L. Jackson,
Dates:	August 2, 2005 and December 7, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:40:17).
Abstract:	Community activist James L. Jackson (1926 -) is a lifelong civil servant and resident of East Point, Georgia. Jackson served as chairperson of the East Point Community Relations Commission; president of Mallalieu United Methodist Men and the Atlanta-College Park District United Methodist Men; president of the South Fulton Boosters Association of East Point; and president of the Gus Thornhill Scholarship Committee. Jackson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 2, 2005 and December 7, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia and East Point, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_180
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

“Mr. East Point”, James Louis Jackson was born on April 18, 1926, in Griffin, Georgia. Jackson’s parents Ola Mae Meadows and R.V. Jackson separated, and Jackson’s mother raised him in predominantly black East Point, Georgia. Jackson attended Bayard Street Elementary School and Booker T. Washington High School, before volunteering for the United States Army at age sixteen in 1942. Serving in France as a member of the 4253rd Quartermaster Truck Company, Jackson became part of the celebrated Red Ball Express. Obtaining the rank of Tech Sergeant, Jackson returned to East Point, Georgia in 1946.

In 1947, Jackson was hired as a mechanic’s helper at the United States Army Depot and would work as a mechanic or driver for the federal government until his retirement twenty-seven years later. Certified as a Lay Parish Associate of the United Methodist Church, Jackson was a member of East Point’s Mallalieu United Methodist Church for over sixty-nine years. Jackson also served as chairperson of the East Point Community Relations Commission; president of Mallalieu United Methodist Men and the Atlanta-College Park District United Methodist Men; president of the South Fulton Boosters Association of East Point; and president of the Gus Thornhill Scholarship Committee. Jackson was member of the East Point Housing Review Board; the Ethnic Minority Local Church Committee; the Department of Political and Human Rights; and the general boards of Laity, Discipleship, Church and Society.

Jackson was a recipient of the East Point Community Relations Distinguished Service Award in 1979, and both the George C. Burnett Citizen of the Year Award, and a life membership in the United Methodists Men in 1984. In 1996, the United Methodist Church’s Atlanta-College Park designated an official James L. Jackson Day. In 2002, East Point Mayor Patsy Jo Hilliard announced the opening of the James L. Jackson Pedestrian Community Foot

Bridge, which spans two hundred ten feet and crosses six railroad tracks and the MARTA Line.

Jackson has had two children and five grandchildren with his wife, Gladys Phillips Jackson.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with James L. Jackson was conducted by Ed Anderson and Larry Crowe on August 2, 2005 and December 7, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia and East Point, Georgia, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community activist James L. Jackson (1926 -) is a lifelong civil servant and resident of East Point, Georgia. Jackson served as chairperson of the East Point Community Relations Commission; president of Mallalieu United Methodist Men and the Atlanta-College Park District United Methodist Men; president of the South Fulton Boosters Association of East Point; and president of the Gus Thornhill Scholarship Committee.

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:

Jackson, James L., 1926-

Anderson, Ed (Interviewer)

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Jackson, James L., 1926- --Interviews

African American civic leaders--Georgia--Interviews

African American Methodists--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Community Activist

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 James L. Jackson, August 2, 2005 and December 7, 2005. 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 James L. Jackson, Section A2005_180_001_001, TRT: 0:30:10
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James L. Jackson was born on April 18, 1926 to Ola Mae Meadows and R.V. Jackson in Griffin, Georgia. His mother was born in 1909 to the descendants of slaves from Satilla, Georgia. She met Jackson's father in high school in Griffin. They divorced after one year of marriage. As a result, Jackson was raised by his maternal grandparents, Mattie Atkins Meadows and James Meadows, while his mother worked in Connecticut. Jackson was closest to his grandfather, who worked for the railroad and then for Hercules Powder Company, and who made herbal remedies. Jackson first met his father when he was twelve years old. His father was married three times, served as a deacon in his church, and worked at a lumber company making specialty items. His experience of his parents' divorce and the lessons of his grandfather influenced how he raised his children later in life. He recalls debating the election of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt with his high school civics teacher and enduring the bitterly cold winter of 1935. African American civic leaders--Georgia--Interviews.
African American Methodists--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with James L. Jackson, Section A2005_180_001_002, TRT: 0:29:30
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James L. Jackson grew up in East Point, Georgia with his maternal grandparents. While the neighborhood was dominated by whites who worked in the chemical plants and cotton mills south of Atlanta, Georgia, there were several black enclaves. He saw movies at the segregated Fairfax Theater. Jackson's family attended Mallalieu Methodist Church. He had a contentious relationship with his grandmother, and he believes that his cousin James was her favorite. However, he was very close with his grandfather, whose cousin, Wilbur Scott, taught Jackson to read and write. He was thus promoted past kindergarten at Bayard Street Elementary School in East Point. He remembers stealing a Christmas tree from a local farm for his classroom when he was nine years old. Jackson then attended Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta. When his grandfather passed away in 1940, Jackson used his grandfather's insurance policy to purchase a bicycle, so he could to work at a local pharmacy. He recalls building bicycles and other toys.

Video Oral History Interview with James L. Jackson, Section A2005_180_001_003, TRT: 0:30:10
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James L. Jackson attended Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta, Georgia. While he was gifted mathematics student, his grades suffered because he cut class. Against his grandmother's explicit wishes, he played football in high school. In 1942, he dropped out of school to join the U.S. Army at sixteen years old. He trained at Camp Lee in Prince George County, Virginia. He was then stationed in Camp Swift, Texas where he worked as the demolition expert in an engineering unit with Medal of Honor recipient Lieutenant James E. Robinson, Jr. In Texas, his unit built bridges across the Colorado River. His unit then shipped off to France, where they joined the 4253rd Quartermaster Truck Company. They were part of the Red Ball Express, an African American truck convoy responsible for delivering gas and supplies to the front lines. He recalls the military leaders with whom he worked, stories from the battlefield, meals

eaten in Paris, and his extended furlough in Switzerland.

Video Oral History Interview with James L. Jackson, Section A2005_180_001_004, TRT: 0:30:12
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James L. Jackson recalls meeting seven Tuskegee Airmen at a rest center for prisoners of war in Étretat, France. He also watched the group perform an airshow in Europe. While serving in France, he met French Martinique soldiers from the West Indies. He notes European reactions to black soldiers, stating that, among the English, he saw more classism than racism. Jackson left the U.S. Army in 1946. He returned to East Point, Georgia, where he worked as a janitor and at the local battery plant and played baseball for the East Point Bears. After playing semi-professional baseball for ten years, he turned down an offer to play in the Negro League. In 1947, Jackson married his wife, Gladys Phillips Jackson. That year, he was hired as a mechanic's helper at the Atlanta Army Depot in Forest Park, Georgia. Due to racial discrimination, Jackson was not classed as a career employee. He was not considered for promotion to junior mechanic, despite knowing the position well enough to train his white colleagues.

Video Oral History Interview with James L. Jackson, Section A2005_180_001_005, TRT: 0:29:10
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James L. Jackson was made a career employee at the Atlanta Army Depot after ten years of work. He became a bus and truck driver for the Depot and developed a relationship with his racist supervisor. Jackson retired from the Army Depot in 1974 and increased his involvement in the East Point, Georgia community. He repeatedly ran for East Point city council, losing for the last time in 1988. He served as the chairman of East Point's Community Relations Commission, which was formed by Mayor R.E. Brown after a riot broke out in East Point. He dealt with criticism not just from politicians but from the African American community as well. At Mallalieu Methodist Church in East Point, Jackson served as head of the deacon board and chaired the Ethnic Minority Local Church Committee. Jackson received numerous awards and honors for his community work, including the George C. Burnett Citizen of the Year Award and a community foot bridge dedicated in his honor. He was named Mr. East Point in 2004.

Video Oral History Interview with James L. Jackson, Section A2005_180_002_006, TRT: 0:29:15
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James L. Jackson reflects upon his life. He recalls the high points of his life: traveling the world with the U.S. military during World War II, with the Mallalieu Methodist Church in East Point, Georgia, and with the East Point Bears baseball team. In particular, he recalls visiting Czechoslovakia, Holland and Lake Geneva in Switzerland. He expresses his regrets that he did not pursue further education and that fought with his grandmother. He encourages young people and aspiring community activists to constantly take stock of their life and to seek perfection. Moving forward, Jackson wants to continue to set an example for the young people of his church and to welcome more people into the United Methodist faith. Jackson expresses his hope that the African American community will focus on the attitudes and spirit of others, rather than their color.

Video Oral History Interview with James L. Jackson, Section A2005_180_002_007, TRT: 0:29:40
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James L. Jackson served on the General Board of Church & Society in Washington D.C. from 1980 to 1988. On the board, he served with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Leontine Kelly, and Theresa Hoover. He recalls addressing a group from the United Nations on the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. He

reflects upon what he learned from that experience, and the meaning of religion in an individual's life. Jackson also reflects upon the Civil Rights Movement and the effect it had on his life; and he describes his concerns about the future of the African American community. Jackson shares his opinions on affirmative action, the lessons about leadership to be learned from sports, and the importance of history in a person's life. He warns against fully trusting the historical record based upon his experiences as a soldier in World War II. Jackson concludes by reflecting upon his achievements, the advice he gave his son when he entered the ministry, and how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with James L. Jackson, Section A2005_180_002_008, TRT: 0:12:10
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James L. Jackson narrates his photographs.