

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with William Baxter

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Baxter, William, 1940-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with William Baxter,
Dates:	August 10, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:10:54).
Abstract:	Basketball official William Baxter (1940 - 2021) was one of approximately twelve African American officials in the Eastern College Athletic Conference during the 1970s. Baxter also served as Director of Recreation for the Department of Parks and Recreation in the Bronx, New York. Baxter was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 10, 2005, in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_194
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball official William C. Baxter, Jr., was born on May 16, 1940, in Harlem, New York. His parents, Christine Juanita Segee Baxter Phillips and William C. Baxter, Sr., owned Baxter's Hats in New York City. Baxter attended Saint Augustine's University, in Raleigh, North Carolina, on a basketball scholarship and received his B.A. degree in physical education in 1962. After graduation, he began working for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, where he managed various athletic competitions. He later was promoted to supervisor and Bronx borough director. During the 1960s, he played guard in the summer pro-leagues and began officiating high school games, including the Public Schools Athletic League Championship, in New York City. In 1972, Baxter passed the examination to become a college referee and began officiating for the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC). In 1975, Baxter received his M.A. degree in recreation and education from Herbert Lehman College in New York City. He also served for seven years in the National Guard.

Baxter worked as one of approximately twelve African American officials in the New York-New Jersey region. He also was one of the first African Americans to become a basketball official for major college games. Baxter officiated at annual tournaments for the NCAA. In 2000, Baxter retired as an ECAC official, but continued to serve as a referee at the high school and junior college levels.

Baxter and his wife, Thelma Baxter, lived in Englewood, New Jersey. They had two daughters, Dana and Dawn.

Baxter passed away on October 13, 2021, at the age of 81.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with William Baxter was conducted by Robert Hayden on August 10, 2005, in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Basketball official William Baxter (1940 - 2021) was one of approximately twelve African American officials in the Eastern College Athletic Conference during the 1970s. Baxter also served as Director of Recreation for the Department of Parks and Recreation in the Bronx, New York.

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:

Baxter, William, 1940-

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Baxter, William, 1940- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Occupations:

Basketball Official

HistoryMakers® Category:

SportsMakers

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 William Baxter, August 10, 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 William Baxter, Section A2005_194_001_001, TRT: 0:29:26 ?

William Baxter was born on May 16, 1940 in Harlem, New York to Christine Segee Phillips and William Baxter, Sr. Baxter's mother was born in 1917 in Columbia, South Carolina, but moved to Harlem at age ten. His maternal grandmother, the daughter of a slave and a slave-owner of German and Irish descent, was also born in Columbia. She was an excellent cook. Baxter's father was born in 1909 in Henderson, North Carolina to Pauline Garland Baxter and

Dr. John E. Baxter. Baxter's father moved to New York City to attend Renard School of Embalming, but he never obtained his license. Baxter's parents owned and operated Baxter's Hats until World War II forced them out of business. Baxter's father worked as a cab driver, then reopened the store in the 1960s. Baxter grew up as the oldest of four siblings in Harlem. Baxter was the director of recreation for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation for thirty-seven years, and officiated basketball games at the high school and college levels for thirty years.

Video Oral History Interview with William Baxter, Section A2005_194_001_002, TRT: 0:30:23 ?

William Baxter enjoyed flavored ice treats, music and dances as a child. Most people in his Harlem neighborhood worked as domestics. Baxter remembers walking to school in the 1947 blizzard only to find it closed. Baxter first attended the private Little Red School House and Elisabeth Irwin High School in New York City until his parents could no longer afford the tuition. Baxter transferred to P.S. 68, then P.S. 157, where he sang Negro spirituals in glee club. When Baxter did not make the basketball team at Cooper Junior High School, his mentor, Holcombe Rucker, coached him, and Baxter improved his skills. Instead of joining the basketball team at Commerce High School, Baxter worked as a messenger and as a page at the George Bruce Library to help support his family. A social worker advised him to pursue work instead of higher education. Refusing to give up his dreams of college and professional basketball, Baxter instead attended St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, North Carolina on a basketball scholarship.

Video Oral History Interview with William Baxter, Section A2005_194_001_003, TRT: 0:28:58 ?

William Baxter played point guard in the championship tournament at St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, North Carolina, where his team placed second. His toughest college professor was Julia E. Delany, daughter of Henry Delaney and sibling of the Delaney sisters. During his summer breaks, Baxter worked as a playground assistant for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. In the late 1960s, Baxter played for the Eastern Professional Basketball League Trenton Colonials and Wilkes-Barre Barons. As a semi-pro athlete, he played with K.C. Jones, John Williamson and Julius "Dr. J." Erving. He married his wife, Thelma Baxter, in 1964, and his two daughters were born in 1970 and 1975, respectively. After a brief stint teaching, Baxter returned to the recreation department to direct the Tompkins Corners Cultural Center, then the J. Rozier Hansborough Recreation Center. He was promoted to borough recreation director of the Bronx, and received his master's degree in recreation from Lehman College.

Video Oral History Interview with William Baxter, Section A2005_194_001_004, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

William Baxter had to resolve disputes between various ethnic communities as manager of the St. James Recreation Center in New York City. As recreation director for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, Baxter was responsible for staffing, programming, and budgets. Baxter's college basketball experience led to his interest in basketball officiating, although there were not many minorities in the field at the time. The application process was difficult, but Baxter passed the test on his first try. Through the Sports United Boro-Wide Officials Association, Baxter started officiating junior varsity basketball and playground games in 1972. After a few years of officiating high school basketball, Baxter applied to referee college games. He officiated his first games at Pratt Institute and Queens College in New York City. The job required him to stay in shape as he made calls on the plays. Baxter talks about fellow basketball officiates David Day and John Purvis, and his wife's educational career.

Video Oral History Interview with William Baxter, Section A2005_194_001_005, TRT: 0:12:47 ?

William Baxter retired from the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation in 1999 and from collegiate basketball officiating in 2000. During his twenty-eight year career, Baxter officiated the high school finals at Madison Square Garden in New York City, received an official of the year award from the Public Schools Athletic League, and plaques for officiating Division I and II basketball tournaments. Baxter describes one of his role models, John Purvis, a fellow manager for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Baxter shares his advice for young people, describes those he has helped, and talks about his admiration for his wife, Thelma Baxter. He reflects upon his life, his hopes and concerns for the African American community and how he would like to be remembered.