

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Harvey Smith

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Smith, Harvey, 1922-2018
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Harvey Smith,
Dates:	August 24, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:14:10).
Abstract:	Dentist Dr. Harvey Smith (1922 - 2018) was a captain in the Dental Corps of the U.S. Army. As a dentist, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was one of his patients. Smith was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 24, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_202
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dentist Harvey Bryant Smith was born October 22, 1922 in Atlanta, Georgia. His parents, Baptist Reverend Harvey Miles Smith and Stella Bryant Smith, attended Morehouse College and Spelman College, respectively, and were friends of Rev. A.D. Williams, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's grandfather. Smith grew up in Albany, Georgia, where his father was pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church. He attended Ashby Street School in Atlanta, and Ware Street School and Monroe Elementary in Albany. Inspired by dentist Joseph Ellis, Smith dreamed of becoming a dentist. He graduated from Georgia Normal College High School, now Albany State University, as class president in 1939. After graduation as a pre-med student at Morehouse College in 1943, Smith entered the United States Army. The army paid his way through Howard University Dental School, and in 1946, he graduated, was married and opened a dental practice on Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, Georgia.

Returning to the U.S. Army in 1951, Smith served as captain in the Dental Corps at Fort Stewart, Georgia through 1953. Smith became active in the integration of the Georgia State Dental Association in 1953. He also became a member of the Northern District Council for Dentistry. When Atlanta's most prominent African American dentist, Dr. B.F. Anderson lost his arm, he gave his practice to Smith, who then worked to increase the practice. Smith's patients included Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders. Appointed to the Advisory Board of the Georgia Dental Association by former United States President, then Governor Jimmy Carter in the late 1970s, Smith sought to encourage opportunities for black dentists.

Smith was a member of the National Dental Association, the American Dental Association and the Academy of General Dentistry. In 2001, Smith retired and continued to live in the home he bought in 1957.

Smith and his wife, Laveda, had three grown children, Jane, Harvey and Homer.

Dr. Harvey Smith passed away on May 4, 2018.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Harvey Smith was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 24, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Dentist Dr. Harvey Smith (1922 - 2018) was a captain in the Dental Corps of the U.S. Army. As a dentist, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was one of his patients.

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:

Smith, Harvey, 1922-2018

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Smith, Harvey, 1922-2018 --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Dentist

HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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 Dr. Harvey Smith, August 24, 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 Dr. Harvey Smith, Section A2005_202_001_001, TRT: 0:30:00
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Dr. Harvey Smith was born on October 22, 1922, in Atlanta, Georgia to Stella Bryant Smith and Harvey Smith. His maternal grandmother, Nellie Bryant, was a maid at the Atlanta department store Regenstein's, and his grandfather, Henry Bryant, was a contractor who built homes. Smith's paternal grandparents, Lizzie and Reverend Henry Smith, were friends of Reverend A.D. Williams, grandfather to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Smith's mother attended normal school to become a teacher; she also worked as a secretary at Atlanta Life Insurance Company. Smith's father graduated from Morehouse College,

where he co-founded Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. After pastoring at a church in Athens, he moved to Albany, Georgia to pastor Mount Zion Baptist Church. Smith recalls conversations with his father, his parents' personalities, how they met and his earliest childhood memories. He was inspired to become a dentist after meeting Dr. Joseph Ellis while delivering newspapers to the black community on Auburn Avenue in Atlanta.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Harvey Smith, Section A2005_202_001_002, TRT: 0:28:10
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Dr. Harvey Smith grew up in Albany, Georgia, where his father was the pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church. He remembers Albany as a beautiful, clean city. He also recalls his jobs as a young boy, and a lynching in a nearby town. Smith attended Ashby Street School and Ware Street School in Atlanta, and Monroe Elementary School in Albany. Smith dreamed of becoming a dentist. He attended the high school branch of Georgia Normal College, where he participated in the band, on the football team, and graduated as class president in 1939. Smith recalls the band teacher, Mr. Valentine; the principal, Dr. Heard; and his homeroom teacher, Dr. Carrie George, who encouraged him in school. Smith saved money from a summer job to attend Morehouse College, where he was influenced by the president, Dr. Benjamin Mays. Smith recalls seeing W.E.B. Du Bois, and hearing speakers such as Mordecai Johnson, Howard Thurman and others, while at Morehouse. He has three siblings, including HistoryMaker Georgia Dickens.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Harvey Smith, Section A2005_202_001_003, TRT: 0:29:20
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Dr. Harvey Smith attended Morehouse College from 1939 to 1943, where he majored in pre-medicine, played in the band and on the intramural football team. He recalls Dr. Samuel M. Nabrit, who taught him biology; Dr. Harold E. Finley, and the athletic director, Frank L. Forbes. Smith enrolled at Howard University College of Dentistry in 1943 and enlisted in the Army Specialized Training Program to help pay for it. Returning to Atlanta in 1946, he married his girlfriend, Lavada Johnson Smith, and they became parents to their first child, Jane. Smith began his career on Auburn Avenue as the first black dentist in Atlanta in twenty years. He inherited Dr. B.F. Anderson's practice, and later, his first employer's practice. During the Korean War, he served as a captain in the Army Dental Corps at Fort Stewart, Georgia. Upon his return, he integrated the Georgia Dental Association. Smith also recalls being with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at a fundraiser the night of the Birmingham Church Bombing in 1963.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Harvey Smith, Section A2005_202_001_004, TRT: 0:29:10
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Dr. Harvey Smith hosted a celebration party following a fundraiser for the SCLC in 1963, coincidentally, on the night of the Birmingham Church Bombings. He recalls Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s attendance at the event; Dr. King's move to Atlanta; and having once performed a dental examination on Dr. King. Smith attended Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta, where he encountered pastors Maynard Jackson, Sr., Reverend Dr. Samuel Woodrow Williams, and Reverend William Guy. Smith describes the impact of integration on black businesses, the evolution of dentistry, his clients' expectations, and the mistakes he made as a young dentist. Smith volunteered at Ben Massell Dental Clinic in Atlanta, and remembers its integration in the 1960s. During his fifty-year career, Smith was the first African American to be elected to the executive council of the Northern District Dental Society and was

appointed to the Georgia Dental Association's advisory committee by Jimmy Carter, when he was the governor of Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Harvey Smith, Section A2005_202_001_005, TRT: 0:17:30
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Dr. Harvey Smith and his wife, Lavada Johnson Smith, have three children: Jane Smith; Harvey Smith, III, who changed his name to Ahmid Karim; and Homer Smith. Smith practiced dentistry from 1946 until his retirement in 2001, and he was appointed to the advisory committee of the Georgia Dental Association by President Jimmy Carter, when he was the governor of Georgia. Smith is a member of Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Smith reflects upon his concerns for the African American community, his life, his legacy and how he would like to be remembered.