

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gregory Wayne Jones

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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>	Jones, Gregory Wayne, 1948-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Wayne Jones,
<b>Dates:</b>	October 3, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:06:42).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Insurance chief executive Gregory Wayne Jones (1948 - ) has served State Farm Insurance Company in many capacities, including division manager, executive assistant to the President's Office, among others. He became vice president and president of State Farm General Company in California, and was appointed as president and CEO of State Farm General Insurance Company in 2001. Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 3, 2005, in Woodland Hills, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_227
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Insurance executive Gregory Wayne Jones was born December 29, 1948 in Newark, Ohio to Newark natives, Mildred Jean Weaver Jones and Gordon Lewis Jones. One of his ancestors built the Bethel A.M.E. Church in Newark in 1841 and many were pioneers at Wilberforce University. He attended Woodside Elementary School, Central Junior High School, and graduated from Newark High School in 1967. Jones joined State Farm in 1968. In 1975, Jones earned his B.A. degree in business from Franklin University and his M.A. degree in 1981 from Hood College. He also attended the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton Business School and has earned the Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU) designation.

Following a number of promotions, Jones was appointed division manager of State Farm Insurance's Pennsylvania Region in 1983; executive assistant to the President's Office in 1985; deputy regional vice president in the Northern California Region in 1998; and regional vice president in the South Coast Region in 1993. He became vice president of California and president of State Farm General Company in 1998 and was appointed senior vice president in California for State Farm Mutual Insurance Companies and president and CEO of State Farm General Insurance Company in 2001. Jones is the first African American president and CEO in State Farm Insurance's history. Jones serves on the board of directors of State Farm General Insurance Company.

Before he was 25 years old, Jones started an NAACP branch, was chairman of a \$2 million community action agency, and hosted a community service radio program. He is the founder of 100 Black Men of Sonoma County, California and has served on the national board of directors of 100 Black Men. He is a chairman of the board of the Los Angeles Urban League, the California Education for Excellence Foundation, the Los Angeles Sports Council, and Operation Hope. Jones is past chairman of Junior Achievement of Southern California and is a member of the board of trustees of Franklin University and the National Urban League. Jones was a recipient of Empowerment

Achievement Award in 1995; Dollars and Sense Magazine's Corporate Trailblazer Award in 1998; and was the 2000 honoree of the Insurance Industry Charitable Fund.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gregory Wayne Jones was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 3, 2005, in Woodland Hills, California, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Insurance chief executive Gregory Wayne Jones (1948 - ) has served State Farm Insurance Company in many capacities, including division manager, executive assistant to the President's Office, among others. He became vice president and president of State Farm General Company in California, and was appointed as president and CEO of State Farm General Insurance Company in 2001.

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## 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:

Jones, Gregory Wayne, 1948-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jones, Gregory Wayne, 1948- --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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State Farm Insurance Companies

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# Occupations:

Insurance Executive

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# HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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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 Gregory Wayne Jones, October 3, 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).

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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 Gregory Wayne Jones, Section A2005\_227\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:02 ?

Gregory Wayne Jones was born on December 29, 1948 in Newark, Ohio to Mildred Weaver Jones and Gordon Jones. Jones' paternal grandparents were Chester Jones and Virginia Smith Jones. Jones' maternal grandfather, George Weaver, died in a work-related accident. Jones' mother was then raised by her mother, Bessie Norman Weaver, a graduate of Wilberforce University and cousin to one of its trustees, Reverdy C. Ransom. Both of Jones' parents were born and raised in Newark. Jones' mother was trained as a teacher at her mother's alma mater. Unable to find a job, she cleaned houses until she was hired to teach special education. Jones' father dropped out of high school, joined the U.S. Coast Guard, and became a prize winning fighter like his uncle, Norwood Smith. Jones' father then worked for the Ohio Power Company. Jones' family was active at Trinity A.M.E Church, which his maternal grandfather helped build. Jones describes life lessons from his family, his parents' personalities and his earliest childhood memory.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Wayne Jones, Section A2005\_227\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Gregory Wayne Jones remembers his uncle Charles V. Chancellor, Jr., owner of City Tire in Mount Vernon, Ohio and member of the school board. When Jones and his older brother were turned away from a skating rink, his uncle, prominent Ohio attorney Robert Weaver, threatened to sue, so they were allowed to skate. Jones' brother integrated their local YMCA after threatening to sue for admission. Jones attended Woodside Elementary School and Central Junior High School in Newark, Ohio. In his youth, Jones was mischievous and athletic, playing baseball and wrestling at Newark High School. With the encouragement of his high school teacher, Jones ran for student mayor of the day and won, which built his self-confidence. Jones describes his childhood friends, Larry Mullenix and HistoryMaker Charles Henry. Jones' family attended Trinity A.M.E. Church. After marrying his wife, Helen Thompson Jones, in 1968, they encountered discriminatory landlords, but finally were able to find a couple who would rent to them.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Wayne Jones, Section A2005\_227\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Gregory Wayne Jones graduated from Newark High School in 1967 and enrolled at The Ohio State University at Newark, where he played basketball. Jones left college after his wife, Helen Thompson Jones, became pregnant. He began working for State Farm Mutual Insurance Company as a file clerk. Looking to transfer to a State Farm office in Frederick, Maryland, Jones and his wife drove there for a meeting, but were turned away from every hotel. Jones called State Farm executive Charles Snyder, who arranged their stay at a motel. Snyder encouraged Jones to finish college, so Jones attended Franklin University and graduated summa cum laude in 1975. After a year working at the State Farm headquarters in Bloomington, Illinois, Jones was promoted to work under Snyder, who became his mentor. At State Farm, Jones started a minority intern program and became the first black division manager, deputy regional vice president, regional vice president and, eventually, president and CEO. Jones describes his work ethic.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Wayne Jones, Section A2005\_227\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

Gregory Wayne Jones considered working for another insurance company in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania early in his career, but ultimately decided to remain at

State Farm. He created State Farm's first minority intern program, and recruited African American graduates at HBCUs like Dillard University and Xavier University in New Orleans. The program was featured in Black Collegian magazine. Jones acknowledges that diversity has improved at the company. As CEO of State Farm General Insurance Company in California, Jones oversaw 7,500 employees as well as the daily operations. Jones started the Achievement Matters Program at State Farm and founded the Northern California chapter of 100 Black Men. After learning about his great-grandfather's history as a soldier in the U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War, Jones searched for his grave. Jones recounts how he and his father located the grave in Gallia, Ohio. He also reflects upon his hopes and concerns for the African American community, his life and his legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Wayne Jones, Section A2005\_227\_001\_005, TRT: 0:07:30 ?

Gregory Wayne Jones describes how he would like to be remembered. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.