

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Edith Ingram

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Ingram, Edith, 1942-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edith Ingram,
Dates:	January 25, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:20:57).
Abstract:	Judge Edith J. Ingram (1942 - 2020) served on the Hancock County Court of the Ordinary, making her the first African American female judge in Georgia, and later served on the Hancock County Probate Court, making her the first African American female probate judge in the United States. Ingram was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 25, 2006, in Sparta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_007
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Judge Edith J. Ingram was born on January 16, 1942 in Sparta, Georgia to Katherine Hunt and Robert T. Ingram. She attended East End Elementary School and L.S. Ingraham High School. She moved in briefly with her Aunt Mae in New York City after high school and enrolled in Manhattan Medical School, but moved back to Georgia in 1960 where she earned her B.S. degree in education from Fort Valley State College in 1963.

Ingram taught at Moore Elementary School in Griffin, Georgia and at Hancock Central High School, which was established by her father and maternal grandfather. After five years of teaching, her father, the only African American on the Hancock County School Board, prompted her to run for a judgeship. In 1969, Ingram became the first African American female judge in Georgia and upon being elected to serve on the Hancock County Court of the Ordinary. In 1973, she moved to the county's probate court, making her the first African American female probate judge in the United States. She served as probate judge for thirty-six years, presiding over wills, marriages, misdemeanors, felonies and civil disobedience cases. In 1983, Ingram was appointed to serve as a member of the State Democratic Executive Committee by President Jimmy Carter (then Governor of Georgia) and Lieutenant Colonel Ade De Camp. That same year, she was also appointed to the Governor's Staff by then Governor Joe Frank Harris. She retired from the bench in 2004.

Ingram was active in the Sparta community and was a member of the Georgia Association of Probate Judges, the Hancock Chapter of the Georgia Coalition of Black Women where she was president, the National College of Probate Judges, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the Hancock Women's Club, the Hancock County NAACP, and the Democratic Club. She also served on the board of the Ebony International Learning Academy and Preparatory School. She is also the recipient of the Higher Education Award, and was profiled in the book *Black Firsts: 4,000 Ground-Breaking and Pioneering Historical Events*.

Ingram passed away on June 5, 2020.

Edith Jacqueline Ingram was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 25, 2006.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Edith Ingram was conducted by Evelyn Pounds on January 25, 2006, in Sparta, Georgia, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Judge Edith J. Ingram (1942 - 2020) served on the Hancock County Court of the Ordinary, making her the first African American female judge in Georgia, and later served on the Hancock County Probate Court, making her the first African American female probate judge in the United States.

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:

Ingram, Edith, 1942-

Pounds, Evelyn (Interviewer)

Jackson, Adrian (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ingram, Edith, 1942- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Hancock County (Ga.)

Occupations:

County Probate Judge

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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 The Honorable Edith Ingram, January 25, 2006. 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 The Honorable Edith Ingram, Section A2006_007_001_001,
TRT: 0:31:04 ?

The Honorable Edith Ingram was born on January 16, 1942 in Sparta, Georgia to Katherine Hunt Ingram and Robert Ingram. Her maternal great grandfather, Henry A. Hunt, was the son of Susan Hunt and a white judge. Ingram's maternal grandfather rented land instead of sharecropping and gave produce to neighbors in need. He donated the land for Hunt's Chapel and hired help instead of sending his children to harvest cotton. Her paternal grandfather lived in Atlanta, Georgia. Ingram's parents met at school in Sparta. Her father became the town's first African American in office as a member of the board of education, but faced discrimination nonetheless. Ingram grew up near her paternal grandmother in a close-knit African American community called the Gut, and attended Sparta's East End Elementary School and Macedonia Baptist Church. She remembers pig ears cooking in her aunt's store and watching the neighborhood's only television. She also recalls her amazement at the lights upon visiting New York City.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edith Ingram, Section A2006_007_001_002,
TRT: 0:30:34 ?

The Honorable Edith Ingram attended East End Elementary School and L. S. Ingraham High School. Her route to school was occasionally obstructed by convoys of soldiers on their way to Fort Benning. Ingram woke up early to prepare breakfast for her paternal grandmother, Katie Neal Hunt, and her mother, who suffered from rheumatic fever. She and her classmates helped light the wood stove to heat their one-room schoolhouse. After school, she cooked dinner and brought in the chamber pot for the night. Ingram's father kept a large garden behind her grandmother's house, where he grew vegetables like butterbeans, cabbage, collards and corn. The community regularly gathered to cook and eat a hog together. Ingram remembers stealing ice chips from the iceman whenever he made a delivery. She also recalls her favorite teachers and aspiring to become either a teacher or a nurse. The family traveled to Macon, Georgia to shop for the holidays, and Ingram remembers discovering her Christmas presents hidden in her aunt's house.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edith Ingram, Section A2006_007_001_003,
TRT: 0:28:41 ?

The Honorable Edith Ingram participated in drama club, Tri-Hi-Y and cheerleading at L. S. Ingraham High School. In the early 1950s, Charles S. Harper helped Ingram's father and maternal grandfather petition for the opening of a new school, Hancock County Training School. Ingram graduated in 1959, just before the new facility opened in 1960. She moved in briefly with her Aunt Mae in New York City and enrolled in Manhattan Medical School, but gang violence drove her back to Georgia. From 1960 to 1963, she studied elementary education at Fort Valley State College, where dormitories were separated by gender, and there was a strict dress code for the dining hall, classes and weekly vesper. She worked on campus to fund her tuition and joined Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Ingram completed her student teaching in Griffin, Georgia, and was offered a position there after she graduated in 1963. When her mother's health began to falter, she returned to Sparta and taught second grade at Hancock Central High School.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edith Ingram, Section A2006_007_001_004,
TRT: 0:30:45 ?

The Honorable Edith Ingram skipped her 1963 college graduation to fund the high school graduation ceremony of an orphan girl adopted by Ingram's mother.

Ingram worked as a student teacher at Moore Elementary School in Griffin, Georgia. After teaching there for four years, Ingram transferred to Sparta's Hancock Central High School, which had been established by her father and maternal grandfather. Despite the Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954, Sparta's schools remained segregated. In 1966, Ingram's father ran for county commissioner. A ban on black poll workers meant African American votes were not always counted. Their disenfranchisement was enforced by Ku Klux Klan night riders, but her maternal family combated their threats. Ingram's father encouraged her to run for the judgeship; and, in 1968, she became the country's first African American probate judge. As the sole black official in the county government, she was often subject to her peers' racist remarks.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edith Ingram, Section A2006_007_001_005, TRT: 0:29:47 ?

The Honorable Edith Ingram, her father, and John McCowan mobilized African Americans to elect Ingram as probate judge of Hancock County, Georgia. She was shunned by the white officials and received death threats, but was protected and supported by the black community. Ingram served for thirty-six years, and after every re-election her opponents accused her of voter fraud. As probate judge, she met Georgia Governor James Earl "Jimmy" Carter, and was invited to his presidential inauguration. Ingram also met President George H.W. Bush. She was honored with the Higher Education Award and joined the Georgia Coalition of Black Women. In office, Ingram encountered racism from citizens and other government employees. She took on additional duties to serve illiterate constituents, and shares humorous stories from her time on the bench. Ingram retired in 2004 after the death of her mother in 2001 and her father in 2003. She considers how her father's time on Sparta's board of education influenced her life.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edith Ingram, Section A2006_007_001_006, TRT: 0:28:23 ?

The Honorable Edith Ingram defended Sparta's black community from intimidation by the white police force's submachine guns. Ingram, her father, and John McCowan ordered three times as many machine guns, promising to cancel the order when the police gave up their machine guns. They also organized a boycott of Sparta businesses, and Georgia Governor James Earl "Jimmy" Carter flew in to encourage negotiations. Ingram helped organize a school walk-out and march, lasting twenty-six days to pressure the schools to desegregate. She also spoke with Stokely Carmichael upon his visit to Sparta. Ingram reflects on the changes since her election and describes some of the leaders in office, like probate judge Marva Rice. When she retired in 2004, she had both black and white supporters, and she recalls being given a live rooster for Christmas. Ingram reflects upon how she would like to be remembered, her life and legacy, and her desire to share her story. She also offers advice to aspiring judges and educators.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edith Ingram, Section A2006_007_001_007, TRT: 0:21:43 ?

The Honorable Edith Ingram narrates her photographs.