

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Eric "Ricky" McKinnie

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | McKinnie, Eric, 1952- |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Eric "Ricky" McKinnie, |
| Dates: | October 11, 2006 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2006 |
| Physical Description: | 4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:46:40). |
| Abstract: | Drummer and singer Eric "Ricky" McKinnie (1952 -) joined the world-renowned Blind Boys of Alabama as a drummer, vocalist and tour manager in 1989. He won four Grammy Awards for Best Traditional Gospel Album. McKinnie was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 11, 2006, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2006_112 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Music arranger, drummer, and vocalist Eric “Ricky” McKinnie was born on July 12, 1952, in Atlanta, Georgia, to Sarah Frances McKinnie Shivers and Ed Lee McKinnie. He attended Crogman Elementary School and graduated from Murphy High School in 1970. McKinnie and his brother were compared to Sam and Dave. Drawn to music, McKinnie joined Troy Ramey and the Soul Searchers in 1970. As a member of the Gospel Keynotes in 1972, McKinnie made a gold record, *Jesus, You Been Good To Me*. Losing his eyesight to glaucoma in 1975, McKinnie continued to perform, often serving as road manager. He formed the Ricky McKinnie Singers with his mother and brother in 1978. They went on to produce two radio programs that are still broadcast on Atlanta’s WYZZ 1480 AM.

In 1989, McKinnie was invited by Clarence Fountain of the world-renowned Blind Boys of Alabama to join the group as a drummer, vocalist and tour manager. McKinnie’s success with the Blind Boys of Alabama includes four Grammy Awards for Best Traditional Gospel Album; the Alabama’s Governor’s Achievement Award; the 2000 induction into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame; the Gospel Quartet Hall of Fame in Birmingham, Alabama, and the 2002 Dove Award. McKinnie has been recognized by Atlanta’s Mayor Shirley Franklin for his contribution to Atlanta’s new anthem and has received an Honorary Doctorate degree from Atlanta’s Carver Bible College. McKinnie, a talented music arranger, is known as the only known blind gospel drummer and has received endorsements from Sabien Cymbol and Taye Drum Companies.

As a member of the Blind Boys of Alabama, he is a spokesperson for the Feed The Hungry Campaign, and supports the Glaucoma Foundation and the Diabetes Foundation. McKinnie and his family founded the Family and Friends Organization of Atlanta.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Eric "Ricky" McKinnie was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 11, 2006, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Drummer and singer Eric "Ricky" McKinnie (1952 -) joined the world-renowned Blind Boys of Alabama as a drummer, vocalist and tour manager in 1989. He won four Grammy Awards for Best Traditional Gospel Album.

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:

McKinnie, Eric, 1952-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
McKinnie, Eric, 1952- --Interviews

African American gospel singers--Interviews

Drummers (Musicians)--Interviews

Gospel musicians--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Blind Boys of Alabama

Blind Boys of Alabama

Occupations:

Drummer

Singer

HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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 Eric "Ricky" McKinnie, October 11, 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 Eric "Ricky" McKinnie, Section A2006_112_001_001, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Eric "Ricky" McKinnie was born on July 12, 1952 in Atlanta, Georgia to Sarah Sharp Shivers and Ed McKinnie. McKinnie's mother was born in McDonough, Georgia to a sharecropper family, and was raised by her father, Phil Sharp. Her family moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where Sharp Shivers worked at Sears, Roebuck and Co. In addition to working as a teacher's aide at Toomer Elementary School in Atlanta, McKinnie's mother sang with Gladys Knight in the Mount Moriah Baptist Church choir and toured with the Marvin Anderson Singers. McKinnie's father was born in Albany, Georgia and worked at Atlanta's Atlantic Envelope Company LLC. Growing up in the Carver Homes housing projects, McKinnie listened to Jackie Wilson and The Blind Boys of Alabama. He learned to play drums at W.H. Crogman Elementary School. At twenty-three years old, McKinnie lost his eyesight due to complications of glaucoma. McKinnie describes his parents' personalities and how they met; his siblings; and the sights, sounds and smells of his childhood.

African American gospel singers--Interviews.

Drummers (Musicians)--Interviews.

Gospel musicians--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Eric "Ricky" McKinnie, Section A2006_112_001_002, TRT: 0:28:00 ?

Eric "Ricky" McKinnie sang in Mount Moriah Baptist Church's choir and taught Sunday school. He also sang in Atlanta's Israel Baptist Church youth choir, founded by his mother. At J.C. Murphy High School, McKinnie won medals for his festival performances with the school band. He also performed in talent shows with his brother, Ronald McKinnie. At age seventeen, McKinnie joined Troy Ramey and the Soul Searchers. Their hit single, 'Great Change,' was played by radio stations across the country. The group performed at the Apollo Theater in New York City and toured cities like Chicago, Illinois. After his eye surgery, McKinnie left the group to join Willie Neal Johnson and The Gospel Keynotes, whose popular song was 'Jesus You Been Good to Me.' McKinnie reflects upon the Civil Rights Movement and remembers the murders of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. He describes his foster sister; and talks about phantom sight and society's perception of people who are blind.

Video Oral History Interview with Eric "Ricky" McKinnie, Section A2006_112_001_003, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Eric "Ricky" McKinnie sang with Willie Neal Johnson and The Gospel Keynotes for six years before starting his own group, The Ricky McKinnie Singers, in Atlanta, Georgia in 1978. McKinnie's mother, the lead singer, hosted the band's radio show, 'Words and Music for Your Soul,' on Atlanta's WYZZ Radio. The Ricky McKinnie Singers' albums include 'Here I Am,' 'I Never Had Love Before,' and 'Hold On to God's Unchanging Hand.' After becoming reacquainted with his childhood friend and the lead singer of The Blind Boys of Alabama, Clarence Fountain, McKinnie joined the group as their drummer and road manager. With The Blind Boys of Alabama, McKinnie won four Grammy Awards for their albums, 'Spirit of the Century,' 'Higher Ground,' 'Go Tell it On the Mountain,' and 'There Will Be a Light.' He talks about his favorite songs by

The Ricky McKinnie Singers and The Blind Boys of Alabama. McKinnie describes his independent personality and reflects upon his career, including his management company, Quality Sound Management.

Video Oral History Interview with Eric "Ricky" McKinnie, Section A2006_112_001_004, TRT: 0:19:50 ?

Eric “Ricky” McKinnie won the Dove Award, the NAACP Image Award and the Helen Keller Achievement Award with The Blind Boys of Alabama. He uses Taye Drums, Sabian cymbals, and Vic Firth drumsticks. McKinnie describes his concerns regarding violence in the African American community. He talks about his daughter and grandchildren, and shares his opinion about the management of money in African American churches. McKinnie also reflects upon his legacy. He concludes the interview by explaining the difference between gospel, spiritual and blues music.