

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with David Steward, Sr.

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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>	Steward, David, 1951-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with David Steward, Sr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 18, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:14:42).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Technology entrepreneur David Steward, Sr. (1951 - ) was the founder, owner and CEO of World Wide Technologies, a company that specializes in supplying technological and supply chain solutions to its customers, suppliers and partners. Steward was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 18, 2006, in Maryland Heights, Missouri. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_178
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Technology entrepreneur David Steward, Sr. was born on July 2, 1951, in Chicago, Illinois. He graduated from Clinton High School in Clinton, Missouri in 1969 and received his B.S. degree in business administration from Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg, Missouri in 1973.

After graduation, Steward worked as a substitute teacher and served as an associate executive for the Boy Scouts of America. In 1974, Steward was hired at Wagner Electric, but was laid off the following year. In 1976, Steward accepted a marketing and sales position with the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company, as the first African American in that role. Steward remained with the company until 1979 when he joined Federal Express and served as a senior account executive. In 1984, Steward founded Transportation Business Specialists, Inc., which audited and reviewed freight-bill and overcharges for the railroad industry. Steward later founded Transport Administrative Services, which was hired by Union Pacific Railroad in 1987, to audit three years of freight bills for undercharges, managing nearly \$15 billion of rate information. In 1990, Steward founded World Wide Technology, Inc., specializing in cloud capabilities, data center and virtualization, security, mobility and networking technologies along with voice, video and collaboration solutions. WWT provides advanced technology solutions from over 3,000 manufacturers to the commercial, government and telecom sectors.

In 2018, WWT made *Fortune's* 100 Best Companies to Work For list for the seventh consecutive year. They also appeared on the 2018 Best Workplace in Technology list by Great Place to Work, *Forbes' Largest Private Companies* list and placed eighth on Glassdoor's 2018 Best Places to Work.

Steward is a member of the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans; the council board chair for the Greater St. Louis Area Council Boy Scouts of America, executive board member of Central Region and vice president and executive board member of National Boy Scouts of America. He is chairman emeritus of Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis and serves on the board of the Global Leadership Forum, St. Louis Regional

Chamber, Civic Progress of St. Louis, and Biblical Business Training. In 2004, Steward published *Doing Business by The Good Book*, which matches scripture with guidelines for business practices.

Steward and his wife, Thelma, have two children.

Steward was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 18, 2006.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with David Steward, Sr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 18, 2006, in Maryland Heights, Missouri, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Technology entrepreneur David Steward, Sr. (1951 - ) was the founder, owner and CEO of World Wide Technologies, a company that specializes in supplying technological and supply chain solutions to its customers, suppliers and partners.

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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:

Steward, David, 1951-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Steward, David, 1951---Interviews

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African American businesspeople--Interviews

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African American executives--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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## Occupations:

Technology Entrepreneur

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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 David Steward, Sr., December 18, 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).

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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 David Steward, Sr., Section A2006\_178\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:33  
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David Steward, Sr. was born on July 2, 1951 in Chicago, Illinois to Dorothy Massingale Steward and Harold Steward. Steward's maternal great-grandfather worked as a porter for the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway. His mother's family originated in Clinton, Missouri, where his maternal grandfather, Fred Massingale, owned a farm and other property. He also hauled trash, and worked as a groundskeeper and chauffeur at the Peabody Coal Company. He moved to Chicago, Illinois to work in a factory during World War II, and returned to Clinton after the war. Steward's maternal grandparents were baseball fans, and brought him to see the Kansas City Monarchs and Athletics play in Kansas City, Missouri. Steward's paternal grandparents, Beatrice Steward and Wiley Steward, migrated from Mississippi to Chicago, Illinois, where he visited them during the summers. His mother excelled at the segregated Lincoln School in Clinton, and graduated from Wendell Phillips High School in Chicago, where she met Steward's father.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with David Steward, Sr., Section A2006\_178\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:16  
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David Steward, Sr.'s father, Harold Steward, worked on the railroad from the age of fourteen years old to help support his family. Upon graduating from high school during World War II, his father joined the U.S. Navy, where he faced racial discrimination. Upon his father's return, Steward's parents married in Chicago, Illinois; but, unable to find housing, moved to Clinton, Missouri. There, his father worked as a mechanic at a car garage, and his parents raised eight children, of whom Steward was a middle child, on his mother's family farm. As a child, Stewart learned to garden, and raised cattle and hogs. His family attended St. James Methodist Church, and his parents emphasized the importance of charity. Steward began his education at the all-black Lincoln School; but, when integration of the local schools began in 1957, was sent to the Franklin School, where he was one of two black students. Steward's father organized community patrols to protect the students from the Ku Klux Klan.

Video Oral History Interview with David Steward, Sr., Section A2006\_178\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:23  
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David Steward, Sr. attended the integrated Franklin School in Clinton, Missouri. His favorite subject was history, although black history was excluded from the curriculum. Steward noticed that his teachers expected more from fair skinned students than darker skinned students like himself. Discouraged, he did not do well in school, although his parents emphasized education at home, and encouraged their children to succeed. Steward admired Charles O. Finley, who owned the Kansas City Athletics; and began playing football in the eighth grade, and basketball at Clinton High School. Upon graduating, Steward received a military deferment to attend Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg, Missouri with his older siblings. He aspired to play for the college basketball team, but was deemed too small by the coach. Steward recalls attending Clinton's segregated movie theater, the Lee Theater; and integrating the public swimming pool. He also remembers the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin

Luther King, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with David Steward, Sr., Section A2006\_178\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:23  
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David Steward, Sr. studied business administration at Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg, Missouri. He was a member of the Black Collegians, and met African American students from St. Louis and Kansas City, Missouri. Upon graduating in 1973, Steward aspired to become an entrepreneur, but struggled to find employment. In 1974, he began working at the Boy Scouts of America as an associate scout executive. He later sold freight services for the Missouri Pacific Railroad, and encountered a client in New Orleans, Louisiana who refused to work with him because of his race. He left the railroad to work at Federal Express, where he learned about business innovation from founder Frederick W. Smith. Steward met his wife, Thelma Steward, through a mutual friend. They married in 1976, and had two children, Kimberly Steward and David Steward, II. He also talks about the influx of small business loans for African Americans during the Nixon administration in the 1970s.

Video Oral History Interview with David Steward, Sr., Section A2006\_178\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:28  
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David Steward, Sr. became the top salesperson at Federal Express, and received an award from Chairman Frederick W. Smith. In 1984, he left Federal Express to acquire Transportation Business Specialists, an auditing business based in St. Joseph, Missouri. His clients included Pfizer Inc. and the Campbell Soup Company. In 1987, Steward's company began implementing internet, intranet and extranet applications, and secured a \$15 billion, three-year contract with the Union Pacific Railroad through Steward's business connections at Missouri Pacific Railroad. Then, recognizing the potential of computer technology, Steward founded World Wide Technology, Inc. in Maryland Heights, Missouri in 1990. His first client was Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. In its first year, World Wide Technology, Inc. generated \$3.5 million in sales. Steward recalls encountering management problems in 1993. He also talks about the federal 8(a) Business Development Program, and the importance of customer satisfaction.

Video Oral History Interview with David Steward, Sr., Section A2006\_178\_001\_006, TRT: 0:28:08  
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David Steward, Sr.'s clients at World Wide Technology, Inc. included Cisco Systems, Inc., Hewlett-Packard Company and Dell Inc. In 2003, the company generated \$1 billion in sales; and, in 2006, that figure doubled to \$2 billion. The privately held company specialized in telepresence, internet security and systems integration; and partnered with Sun Microsystems, Inc. and EMC Corporation. World Wide Technology, Inc. secured government contracts through the 8(a) Business Development Program, and worked with the U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service. In 2004, Steward and writer Robert L. Shook coauthored 'Doing Business by the Good Book,' which featured a foreword written by President George Herbert Walker Bush. Steward describes his business philosophy, which included hiring innovative employees who share the company's core values. Steward was a member of the Salem United Methodist Church in St. Louis, Missouri.

Video Oral History Interview with David Steward, Sr., Section A2006\_178\_001\_007, TRT: 0:21:31  
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David Steward, Sr. joined the United Way of Greater St. Louis in St. Louis, Missouri after being recruited by its president, Charmaine Chapman. He participated in the African American Leadership Giving Initiative alongside

Donald M. Suggs, the publisher of the St. Louis American; and businessman Wayman Smith. Steward and his wife, Thelma Steward, chaired the program from 2000 to 2001. After Chapman's death, the initiative was renamed the Charmaine Chapman Leadership Society in her memory. Steward describes his family, as well as his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He also reflects upon his career, legacy and how he would like to be remembered.