

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Edward Adams

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Adams, Edward, 1939-2008
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Edward Adams,
Dates:	February 7, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:25:30).
Abstract:	Business consultant and corporate executive Edward Adams (1939 - 2008) worked with IBM for over three decades, working his way up from assistant buyer to such high-ranking positions as Director of Site Operations, Regional Manager of Corporate Community Relations, and Public Affairs for the Western sites. Adams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 7, 2007, in Austin, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_053
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Edward Beverle Adams was born on January 31, 1939, in New York City to Clarence and Ernesta Adams. Adams attended the New York City Public Schools and in 1952 integrated the privileged Horace Mann School. Adams graduated at age sixteen and entered New York University's College of Engineering from which he received his B.S. degree in industrial engineering in 1959. Adams did graduate work in industrial engineering at Polytechnic University Brooklyn and attended graduate school at the University of Vermont, majoring in business administration. Adams was also an alumnus of the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, from which he received the Stanford Sloan Executive Fellowship.

In 1964, Adams began his career at IBM as an assistant buyer in Burlington, Vermont, and later advanced to buying and procurement engineering manager. In 1967, he was promoted to Product Industrial Engineer Manager. Adams later became Administrative Assistant to the IBM Director of Manufacturing in Armonk, New York, a position he held for only one year before being named Information Record Division Operations Manager in Boulder, Colorado. In this new position, Adams was responsible for manufacturing and product engineering in magnetic media. Adams left this position in 1973, after receiving the Sloan Fellowship.

In 1975, Adams moved to Austin, Texas, to work in the IBM office as Product-System Manager; he held several leadership positions within IBM including Director of Site Operations, Regional Manager of Corporate Community Relations, and Public Affairs for the Western sites. Adams retired from IBM in 2000 to start his own consulting firm.

Adams was affiliated with various boards and organizations, such as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Higher Education Planning Committee. In 1998, he and his wife, Mary Lou Adams, Ph.D., were honored by the Austin Project for their service to children and families. Adams was awarded an Honorary Doctorate Degree

of Humane Letters by Houston-Tillotson College in 1989. In addition to his professional activities, Adams also held the positions of lector and Eucharistic lay minister at the St. James Episcopal Church.

Adams was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 7, 2007.

Adams passed away on April 8, 2008 at age 69.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Edward Adams was conducted by Denise Gines on February 7, 2007, in Austin, Texas, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Business consultant and corporate executive Edward Adams (1939 - 2008) worked with IBM for over three decades, working his way up from assistant buyer to such high-ranking positions as Director of Site Operations, Regional Manager of Corporate Community Relations, and Public Affairs for the Western sites.

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:

Adams, Edward, 1939-2008

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

Adams, Edward, 1939-2008 --Interviews

African Americans--Interviews

African American businesspeople--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

International Business Machines Corporation.

Occupations:

Business Consultant

Corporate Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 Edward Adams, February 7, 2007. 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 Edward Adams, Section A2007_053_001_001, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Edward Adams was born on January 31, 1939 in New York City to Ernesta Larier Adams and Clarence Adams, Sr. His paternal grandparents, Martha Small Adams and Israel Adams, lived in Barbados, where his grandfather was a tailor. Adams' parents were both born in Barbados, and immigrated to New York City. There, his mother worked as a domestic, and his father became a repairman. They raised Adams and his two siblings in Harlem, where he attended P.S. 184. He was a strong mathematics student, and skipped a grade. Adams went on to attend the integrated J.H.S. 43, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. School, where he was placed in an advanced class, and skipped another grade. He was influenced by his first black teacher, George Manley; and, in 1952, earned a scholarship to the Horace Mann School, an all-boys preparatory school. He was the only black student in his class, and experienced discrimination on numerous occasions. Once, while visiting a wealthy classmate's apartment, the doorman asked him to use the service elevator.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Adams, Section A2007_053_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Edward Adams attended the prestigious Horace Mann School in the Bronx, New York, where his teacher, Mr. Little, encouraged his involvement in the school's drama club. He graduated early at sixteen years old, and became the Horace Mann School's first African American alumnus. He aspired to become an aeronautical engineer, and enrolled at the New York University College of Engineering, where he eventually switched his major from aeronautical engineering to industrial engineering. In his sophomore year, he pledged to the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, where he met basketball players Calvin A. Ramsey and Russell Cunningham. During college, Adams worked part time as a camp counsellor at the YMCA, and later as a display inspector for the U.S. Time Corporation. He graduated in 1959, and interviewed for a sales position at IBM; but, due to racial discrimination, was deemed unsuitable for sales. He worked for the County Machine Company until 1964, when he was hired at IBM as an assistant buyer for office product sales.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Adams, Section A2007_053_001_003, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Edward Adams accepted an assistant buyer position at IBM in 1964. He moved to the majority white town of Burlington, Vermont, where African American physiologist H. Lawrence McCrorey became his friend and mentor. In addition to his sales work at IBM, Adams assisted the recruitment of black employees. He earned a master's degree by attending night classes at the University of Vermont, and was promoted to buying manager. Adams later became a site industrial engineering manager in Armonk, New York, and was then promoted to the role of supplies division manager in Boulder, Colorado. There, he became involved with civil rights activities and mentorship programs at the University of Colorado Boulder. In 1972, Adams was recruited to become the executive assistant to Robert B. Dunlap, IBM's vice president of manufacturing, with whom he toured plants in Europe and the United States. After one year as an assistant, he was selected to enroll in the Sloan Master's Program at the Stanford

Graduate School of Business.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Adams, Section A2007_053_001_004, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Edward Adams had a thirty-six year career at IBM. In the early 1970s, he managed the supply division at a plant in Boulder, Colorado that produced floppy disks and computer tapes. In 1973, he was selected for the Sloan Master's Program at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. He returned to IBM in 1974; but, due to discrimination, was placed in his previous role. In 1975, Adams was sent to Austin, Texas as an office products division manager. He went on to manage the plant's engineering division, and became the site operations manager in 1985. Adams became IBM's manager of external programs in 1996, and later served as the corporate community relations manager for the West Coast. From 2000 until 2003, he worked for IBM in South Africa, where he implemented the KidSmart Early Learning Program. Additionally, Adams organized and served as president of the Austin Area Urban League; and was active with the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, Austin City Council and Texas Workforce Investment Council.

Video Oral History Interview with Edward Adams, Section A2007_053_001_005, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Edward Adams was active in the community of Austin, Texas during his career at IBM. He received an honorary doctorate from Austin's Hutson-Tillotson College, and served as chairman of the school's board from 1984 to 2005. Later, he helped found the Texas Business and Education Coalition, where he recruited local business leaders to support education reform and minority students. Adams went on to serve as the vice president of Texans for Education Opportunity, where he lobbied corporations directly to raise funds for education reform. He also describes his involvement with the Boule of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity and St. James' Episcopal Church, where he served for a time as senior warden. Adams reflects upon his life, family and message to future generations; and concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.