

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Earl Francis Lloyd

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lloyd, Earl, 1928-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Earl Francis Lloyd,
Dates:	March 16, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:57:22).
Abstract:	Basketball player Earl Francis Lloyd (1928 - 2015) was the first African American to play in a game in the National Basketball Association. Lloyd was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 16, 2007, in Crossville, Tennessee. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_093
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Earl Francis “Big Cat” Lloyd, the first African American to play in a National Basketball Association game, was born on April 3, 1928 in Alexandria, Virginia. Lloyd was raised by his father, Theodore Benjamin Lloyd, and mother, Daisy Mitchell Lloyd, in the Berg area of Alexandria. Lloyd’s mother’s wisdom influenced him to become a good student and an outstanding athlete at Lyles-Crouch Elementary School and Parker-Gray High School. His coach, Louis Randolph Johnson, helped Lloyd to enroll at West Virginia State University (WVSU) after his 1946 high school graduation. The speedy defensive-minded Lloyd, at 6’7” tall, led WVSU to two CIAA Conference and Tournament Championships in 1948 and 1949. Lloyd was named All-Conference three times and was All-American twice, as highlighted by the *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1949 and 1950. Lloyd graduated from WVSU with his B.S. degree in physical education in 1950.

In 1950, Lloyd was among the first three black players drafted by an NBA team when he was signed by the Washington Capitols, and became the first black to play in an NBA game on October 31, 1950 as part of Washington coach Horace “Bones” McKinney’s starting five. Drafted by the U.S. Army in 1951, Lloyd captured four U.S. Army basketball titles. Returning to the NBA in 1952, Lloyd and teammate Jim Tucker became the first African Americans to win an NBA title in 1955 with Dolph Schayes and the Syracuse Nationals. That year, Lloyd averaged 10.2 points and 7.7 rebounds for Syracuse, beating the Fort Wayne Pistons four games to three in a seven game series for the NBA title. Lloyd closed out his playing career with the Detroit Pistons from 1958 to 1960. Over his professional career, Lloyd played in over 560 games in nine seasons and averaged 8.4 points and 6.4 rebounds per game.

In 1960, Lloyd served as assistant coach and scout for the Detroit Pistons. As a scout, he helped draft Bailey Howell, but failed to interest Detroit in future legends Earl “the Pearl” Monroe and Willis Reed. Lloyd served as the NBA’s first non-playing coach with the Pistons from 1971 to 1973. After basketball, he worked for Chrysler and as a job-placement administrator with the Detroit Public Schools. Further recognition of Lloyd began when his name appeared as the answer to a question on television’s *Jeopardy* quiz show in 1988. In the 1990s, Lloyd

worked for the steel and auto parts company of former Piston, Dave Bing, who had played for Lloyd during his years at the helm of the Pistons.

Now retired and living in Tennessee, Lloyd and his wife, Ginny, have one grown child.

Lloyd was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 16, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Earl Francis Lloyd was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 16, 2007, in Crossville, Tennessee, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Basketball player Earl Francis Lloyd (1928 - 2015) was the first African American to play in a game in the National Basketball Association.

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:

Lloyd, Earl, 1928-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lloyd, Earl, 1928- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

National Basketball Association.

Occupations:

Basketball Player

HistoryMakers® Category:

SportsMakers

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 Earl Francis Lloyd, March 16, 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 Earl Francis Lloyd, Section A2007_093_001_001, TRT: 0:29:18
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Earl Francis Lloyd was born on April 3, 1928 in Alexandria, Virginia to Daisy Mitchell Lloyd and Theodore Lloyd. His mother was born in Hamilton, Virginia, and was adopted by the Mitchell family, who had a farm in the area. She moved to Alexandria at fifteen years old. There, she worked as a domestic, and eventually married Lloyd's father, a coal yard worker who was illiterate. Lloyd was greatly influenced by his mother, who stressed values such as responsibility, self-discipline and keeping good company. He grew up with two older brothers, Ernest Lloyd and Theodore Lloyd, and they attended Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church in Alexandria with their mother. Lloyd also visited his maternal relatives in Hamilton for two weeks each summer. He grew to be 6'5", a trait he inherited from his paternal grandfather; and played three sports, including basketball, in high school. Lloyd also recalls his growing awareness of segregation in Virginia during the end of his high school years.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Francis Lloyd, Section A2007_093_001_002, TRT: 0:28:43
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Earl Francis Lloyd grew up in the Berg, an all-black neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia. He began his education at the segregated Lyles-Crouch Elementary School, where he was mentored by his seventh grade teacher, Helen Day. Lloyd went on to Parker-Gray High School, where he played basketball, baseball and football, and was named to the all-conference team in each sport. His coach was Louis Randolph Johnson, who never raised his voice but was a strict disciplinarian who stressed punctuality and personal responsibility. Lloyd's teams played schools from the Washington, D.C. area, including basketball rival Maggie L. Walker High School in Richmond, Virginia; and Frederick Douglass High School in Baltimore, Maryland. Lloyd recalls defeating the latter in a homecoming football game alongside his school's star running back, Oliver Ellis. In his senior year, Lloyd's team qualified for the Virginia high school basketball championship, but lost the final game to Maggie L. Walker High School in overtime.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Francis Lloyd, Section A2007_093_001_003, TRT: 0:30:01
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Earl Francis Lloyd played forward on the basketball team at Parker-Gray High School in Alexandria, Virginia, where his teammates included Horace Burton and William "Red" Jackson. He graduated in 1946; and, at the advice of Coach Louis Randolph Johnson, enrolled at West Virginia State College. Another of Lloyd's high school teammates, Oliver Ellis, attended Howard University on a football scholarship, but was not a starting player there, and transferred to West Virginia State College. There, Ellis became an All-American halfback, and Lloyd played basketball for Coach Mark Cardwell. The basketball team was undefeated in his sophomore season, and Lloyd was named the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association's player of the decade from 1946 to 1955. The team often experienced discrimination, and was unable to find off-campus housing when travelling to games in the South. They also did not lift weights, due to a lack of facilities; and retained black physicians in Charleston, West Virginia as team doctors.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Francis Lloyd, Section A2007_093_001_004, TRT: 0:28:16
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Earl Francis Lloyd attended West Virginia State College in Institute, West Virginia, where he majored in physical education. He was the star of the college's basketball team under Coach Mark Cardwell, and won several Central

Intercollegiate Athletic Association championships in his career. During the 1940s, African American professional basketball players, such as Nathaniel “Sweetwater” Clifton and Charlie Isles, played for barnstorming teams like the New York Renaissance and the Harlem Globetrotters. Then, in 1950, Lloyd was one of the first black players to be selected in the National Basketball Association (NBA) draft, when he and Harold Hunter were chosen by the Washington Capitols. While Hunter was eliminated during training, Lloyd made the team. He played forward in the NBA, and worked to build trusting partnerships with his teammates so that they would pass him the ball. He also talks about navigating segregated buses, trains and restaurants during his basketball career.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Francis Lloyd, Section A2007_093_001_005, TRT: 0:29:33
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Earl Francis Lloyd was selected by the Washington Capitols in the 1950 National Basketball Association draft. Chuck Cooper and Nathaniel “Sweetwater” Clifton also debuted in 1950, which was the first season that African Americans were allowed to enter the league. On the Washington Capitols team, Lloyd played alongside Dick Schnittker and Bill Sharman, and was coached by Horace “Bones” McKinney. At the time, most professional sports teams in Washington, D.C. did not sign black players; and, at Lloyd’s first game with the team, his mother confronted fans who called him a derogatory name. In 1951, Lloyd was drafted into the U.S. Army. He was stationed for eighteen months in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and was subjected to segregation whenever he left the base. There, he played on the 522nd Infantry Battalion basketball team, and won the Fourth U.S. Army title. After delisting, Lloyd joined the Syracuse Nationals, where he focused on providing rebounding and defense to support the team’s star, Dolph Schayes.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Francis Lloyd, Section A2007_093_001_006, TRT: 0:28:36
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Earl Francis Lloyd played in the National Basketball Association (NBA) for the Syracuse Nationals. They lost the championship series to George Mikan and the Minneapolis Lakers in 1954, but won the title in 1955. In 1958, Lloyd was replaced with Bob Hopkins in the starting lineup. He requested a trade, and was sent to the Detroit Pistons, where his teammates included Walter Dukes, George Yardley, player-coach Dick McGuire and Bailey Howell, who Lloyd trained as his replacement. In 1960, Lloyd retired from playing, and became an assistant coach and head scout for McGuire. He continued in that role for eight years, and also assisted the subsequent player-coach, Dave DeBusschere. The Pistons often refused to follow Lloyd’s scouting advice, including when they drafted Reggie Harding, and passed over Earl Monroe and Willis Reed. He successfully advocated for the selection of Dave Bing, who went on to a hall of fame career. In 1968, Lloyd left the Pistons to work at the Chrysler Corporation.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Francis Lloyd, Section A2007_093_001_007, TRT: 0:29:23
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Earl Francis Lloyd was the head scout for the Detroit Pistons during the 1960s, and advised the team to draft Bob Lanier. In 1968, Lloyd left to work for the Chrysler Corporation; but, in 1971, returned to the Pistons as head coach. He was among the first African American head coaches in the National Basketball Association (NBA). His predecessors included Bill Russell and Al Attles. Lloyd's coaching tenure was difficult, as the team's star player, Dave Bing, missed thirty-five games due to an injury. Lloyd was terminated in 1972, and returned to the Chrysler Corporation, but was laid off in 1974. Then, Lloyd

began working in Detroit, Michigan as the civilian deputy chief of the Detroit Police Department, and then as a job training program administrator at the Detroit Public Schools Community District. He recalls counseling youth on resumes and professional self-presentation. Lloyd later accepted a job offer from Dave Bing, who founded a steel company after his NBA career.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Francis Lloyd, Section A2007_093_001_008, TRT: 0:29:56
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Earl Francis Lloyd worked as a community relations coordinator for the Bing Group, a conglomerate led by Dave Bing, Lloyd's former star player on the Detroit Pistons. He founded a program that hosted monthly field trips for middle school students of all academic levels in Detroit, Michigan. Destinations included five-star restaurants, University of Detroit Mercy basketball games and Greenfield Village, a living history museum founded by Henry Ford in Dearborn, Michigan. Each year, Lloyd traveled to the postseason tournament of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association, which had its sixty-second annual event in 2006. He had three sons, Kenneth Lloyd, Kevin Lloyd and David Lloyd, with his first wife, and later was married for the second time to Charlita Lloyd. Lloyd describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He also reflects upon his life and legacy, and narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Francis Lloyd, Section A2007_093_001_009, TRT: 0:03:36
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Earl Francis Lloyd narrates his photographs.