

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Carlton A. West

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	West, Carlton A., 1943-2016
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Carlton A. West,
Dates:	July 17, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:47:20).
Abstract:	Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Carlton A. West (1943 - 2016) had a private practice for forty years, and he also worked at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago. His patients included Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, Eugene Sawyer, Evel Knievel, Muhammad Ali and Sammy Davis, Jr. West was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 17, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_091
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Carlton A. West was born on December 12, 1943, in Montezuma, Georgia. He grew up on a farm in the central part of Georgia. West earned his B.A. degree in biology in 1965. Dr. Mayes encouraged him to make the Deans list in order to receive scholarship money. West made the Deans list twice and scored high on the MCAT. The summer of his senior year in college, he was exposed to the medical world firsthand through his internship at Harlem Hospital in New York City. This exposure to medicine inspired him to pursue medicine. Without the intention to attend medical school, West was the first student in his class to be accepted into a medical university. He graduated from Meharry University in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1965.

After graduating from medical school, West interned at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago, Illinois, for one year for a general surgery residency. He then took a year off to be the medical director of Dr. Daniel Hale Williams' Health Center based at Providence Hospital on Chicago's South Side. After a year hiatus from surgery, West began his residency at Yale University, completing it in 1975. That same year, he returned to Chicago to open a private practice in orthopedic surgery. In 1977, he became board certified and joined the staff at Michael Reese Hospital. West's notable patients included the late Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, the late Eugene Sawyer, Evel Knievel, Muhammad Ali, Sammy Davis, Jr., and many others.

West served on the Board of the American Diabetes Association and Operation PUSH/Rainbow Coalition. In addition, he served as the President of the Chicago chapter of Meharry University and was a member of Sarasan fraternal order of physicians.

West enjoyed fishing and skiing, remained a resident of Chicago, and was a father and husband.

Dr. Carlton West passed away on March 11, 2016.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Carlton A. West was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 17, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Carlton A. West (1943 - 2016) had a private practice for forty years, and he also worked at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago. His patients included Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, Eugene Sawyer, Evel Knievel, Muhammad Ali and Sammy Davis, Jr.

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:

West, Carlton A., 1943-2016

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

West, Carlton A., 1943-2016 --Interviews

African American surgeons--Interviews

Orthopedists--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Michael Reese Hospital

Occupations:

Orthopedic Surgeon

HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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 Dr. Carlton A. West, July 17, 2008. 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 Dr. Carlton A. West, Section A2008_091_001_001, TRT: 0:28:59 ?

Dr. Carlton A. West was born on December 12, 1943 in Montezuma, Georgia to Estella Fleming West and Rufus West. His paternal great-grandfather was a freedman in Macon County, Georgia. There, West's paternal grandfather, John C. West, acquired land, and built a large home and farm, where he employed a number of workers. West's father was born in Macon County in 1892; and, along with his brother, took over management of the farm when West's grandfather died. West's mother grew up in Houston County, Georgia during the Great Depression. She completed the sixth grade, and taught herself to read. After West's father's first wife passed away, he was introduced to West's mother, who lived in a neighboring county. After marrying, his parents raised nine children, including West's three older half-siblings from his father's first marriage. At West's mother's insistence, he and his siblings attended school while she managed the farm. West's mother also sewed, and canned the crops they raised, like okra and cucumbers.

African American surgeons--Interviews.

Orthopedists--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Carlton A. West, Section A2008_091_001_002, TRT: 0:28:38 ?

Dr. Carlton A. West grew up in Macon County, Georgia in the Flint River Farms community, a resettlement project created by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1937 under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In the community, West was influenced by self-sufficient African Americans, including farmers, teachers and his older relatives. His eldest cousin, Robert West, was a graduate of the Tuskegee Institute, and established West's Mortuary, Inc., a funeral home in Americus, Georgia. West's family attended the New Hope Baptist Church in Montezuma, Georgia, where he participated in his first revival at the age of seven years old. He began his education at the Flint River Farms School, where his first grade teacher inspired him with her enthusiasm. His mother also frequented the school's adult home economics class, which was taught by Pauline Ladd. During this time, West became aware of school segregation, and noticed that the all-white schools had better resources, including hot lunches and new textbooks.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Carlton A. West, Section A2008_091_001_003, TRT: 0:29:03 ?

Dr. Carlton A. West grew up on his paternal family's land in the Flint River Farms resettlement community in Macon County, Georgia. In nearby Montezuma, Georgia, he attended Sunday school at the New Hope Baptist Church. After completing the eighth grade at the Flint River Farms School, West went on to attend D.F. Douglass High School, a newly built school in Montezuma. During this period, he served as the regional president of the Student Library Assistants of Georgia. After completing the eleventh grade in 1961, West matriculated at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He remembers the college's nightly chapel services, where Morehouse College President Benjamin E. Mays regularly spoke. During this time, West participated in sit-in protests at Atlanta's segregated restaurants. The demonstrations were led by SNCC activist Julian Bond, and backed by editor Jesse Hill of The Atlanta Inquirer. To prepare, West attended meetings at the Canterbury House, which was located near the campus of Morehouse College.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Carlton A. West, Section A2008_091_001_004, TRT: 0:29:54 ?

Dr. Carlton A. West studied biology and chemistry at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He pledged to the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, and participated in civil rights demonstrations led by SNCC. He also remembers the black business community on Atlanta's Hunter Street, including Pascal's Restaurant, Frazier's Café Society and the West Hunter Street Baptist Church, where Ralph Abernathy was the pastor. Upon graduating in 1965, West received funding from the State of Georgia to attend Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. There, he was inducted to the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society, and served as president of his senior class. He interned at Harlem Hospital in New York City; and, in 1969, completed a general surgical residency at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. He worked for one year as a director of the Daniel Hale Williams Health Center at Provident Hospital of Cook County, before entering the orthopedic residency program at Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven, Connecticut.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Carlton A. West, Section A2008_091_001_005, TRT: 0:30:50 ?

Dr. Carlton A. West completed his orthopedic residency at Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven, Connecticut, where he was mentored by Dr. Wayne Southwick, the chairman of the Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation at the Yale School of Medicine. In 1975, West opened a private orthopedic practice in Chicago, Illinois, and joined the staff of Michael Reese Hospital, where he treated patients for musculoskeletal injuries. Two years later, he was certified by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgery. His patients included boxer Muhammad Ali, singer Sammy Davis, Jr., and Chicago mayors Harold Washington and Eugene Sawyer. In 1977, West was serving as the orthopedic surgeon on call at Michael Reese Hospital, when stuntman Evel Knievel was admitted with injuries sustained during a rehearsal at Chicago's Shedd Aquarium. West describes the misconceptions about African American bone anatomy; and talks about chiropractic care, orthopedic advancements and the problems caused by bone overuse and underuse.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Carlton A. West, Section A2008_091_001_006, TRT: 0:19:56 ?

Dr. Carlton A. West practiced orthopedic medicine at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago, Illinois, where his patients included stunt performer Evel Knievel. He talks about the possible complications of bone fractures, and shares his recommendations for improving bone health. West served on the national board of Chicago's Operation PUSH, and as the chapter president of the alumni association for Meharry Medical College. At the time of the interview, West's son, Derek West, was an interventional radiologist at the University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences System in Chicago. West also talks about his siblings' careers at the Chicago Board of Education. West reflects upon his hopes and concerns for the African American community, as well as his life and legacy. He concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.