

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Valteau, Paul Raymond, 1946-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr.,
Dates:	August 19, 2011 and June 11, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010 and 2011
Physical Description:	12 uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:56:26).
Abstract:	Lawyer The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. (1946 -) was the Civil Sheriff of Orleans Parish and served for three years as chairman of the R+L Carriers New Orleans Bowl Committee. Valteau was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 19, 2011 and June 11, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois and New Orleans, Louisiana. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_039
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Former Civil Sheriff of Orleans Parish Paul Raymond Valteau, Jr., was born on October 5, 1946, in New Orleans, Louisiana. His father, Paul Valteau Sr. (1918-2003), was a mailman, and his mother, Udine Davis Valteau (1921-1996), was a schoolteacher. His father's parents died when Valteau Sr. was very young, but his mother's parents, Nelly Norman Davis, a housekeeper, and William H. Davis, a bricklayer, lived until 1974 and 1962, respectively. Valteau had two younger siblings, Eileen and Edward, and from 1960 to 1965 he attended St. Augustine High School, an all-boys parochial high school in New Orleans.

In 1969, Valteau obtained his B.A. degree from Dillard University in Sociology, and in 1972, he received his J.D. degree from Loyola University New Orleans School of Law. From 1974 to 1976, Valteau served as a lawyer for the Louisiana legislature, then went on to work as a private practice lawyer with the firm Gerty, Ferry, & Valteau. In 1979, Valteau's elder daughter, Michelle, was born, and in 1982, she was followed by her younger sister, Collette. That same year, Valteau was elected to Civil Sheriff of Orleans Parish, a position he would keep for twenty-eight years. In 2007, he married Paula T. Saizan in Houston, Texas.

From 2006 to 2009, Valteau served as Chairman of the R+L Carriers New Orleans Bowl Committee. At a New Orleans City Council regular meeting on February 19, 2009, the council honored Valteau for his efforts on the Executive Committee of the Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation (GNOSF), commending him for his leadership and its role in the event's growth. In 2010, Sheriff Marlin Gusman was elected as the first single sheriff of Orleans Parish since 1880; until then, Orleans Parish had separate civil and criminal sheriffs. Valteau, the civil sheriff, did not run against Gusman and instead retired from politics. He now heads the private law firm Valteau, Harris, Koenig, & Mayer.

Paul R. Valteau, Jr., was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 11, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. was conducted by Denise Gines and Julieanna L. Richardson on August 19, 2011 and June 11, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois and New Orleans, Louisiana, and was recorded on 12 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Lawyer The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. (1946 -) was the Civil Sheriff of Orleans Parish and served for three years as chairman of the R+L Carriers New Orleans Bowl Committee.

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:

Valteau, Paul Raymond, 1946-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Valteau, Paul Raymond, 1946- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Lawyer

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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 The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., August 19, 2011 and June 11, 2010. 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 The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_001_001, TRT: 0:20:42 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. was born on October 5, 1946 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Udine Davis Valteau and Paul R. Valteau, Sr. His paternal family migrated from France to the Caribbean, and then to the United States.

Valteau's maternal great-grandmother was enslaved by an English naval officer with whom she had nine children, including Valteau's grandmother, Nellie Norman Davis. The officer offered to bring Valteau's grandmother to England, but she opted to stay in Convent, Louisiana. She married William H. Davis, who was born on a plantation in Woodville, Louisiana and became an officer of the bricklayers union. Valteau's paternal grandfather played with the New Orleans Symphony, and at clubs in the Storyville section of New Orleans. He and Valteau's grandmother died young, leaving Valteau's father to be raised by an aunt. Valteau's parents likely met at Xavier University, where his mother studied and his father played semi-professional football. They married during his father's military service.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. grew up in a segregated working class neighborhood in New Orleans, Louisiana. There, his father, Paul R. Valteau, Sr., coached baseball and was the leader of a Boy Scout troop. Valteau cut his arm badly when he was six years old, and was refused treatment at the nearby hospital due to his race. He often patronized black-owned businesses, and collected bottle caps in exchange for entry to the all-black Lincoln Theatre. Valteau attended the Holy Ghost School until the second grade, when he transferred to the Blessed Sacrament School. In the eighth grade, he entered St. Augustine High School, where he had many male African American teachers and mentors. During high school, he also became involved in the Civil Rights Movement. He joined the Coordinating Council of Greater New Orleans and helped African Americans register to vote. Valteau's parents supported his activism, even after he was arrested for his participation in a demonstration.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_001_003, TRT: 0:30:53 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. enrolled in 1965 at Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Upon graduating, he briefly attended the University of Cincinnati in Ohio, before transferring to the Loyola University New Orleans College of Law. He was one of two African American students at the school, and started a minority recruitment program. At the time his graduation, there were thirty African American law students at the university, including Louis Westerfield, who later became dean. While working for the U.S. Department of Justice, Valteau was wrongfully arrested to deter him from investigating a murder at Florida State Hospital. He worked at a poverty program for a year and a half, and then spent three years as counsel for the Louisiana State Legislature. Next, Valteau joined a law practice, where he challenged discriminatory hiring in one of the region's largest bakeries. In 1977, he became the campaign manager for Ernest Morial, the first African American mayor of New Orleans.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_001_004, TRT: 0:29:32 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. served as the campaign manager for Ernest Morial, who was elected in 1977 as the first African American mayor of New Orleans, Louisiana. Valteau was a partner at the law firm of Gerdes and Valteau until 1981, when he decided to run for sheriff of Orleans Parish. He focused his campaign on winning the white vote; and, at the time of the election, had the most white support of any African American politician in the city. During his tenure, Valteau installed computers in the sheriff's office; and, with the growing popularity of the internet, developed the city's first public office website. Valteau also started a reserve deputy association, which included over four

hundred volunteer members. During a hurricane in 1995, Valteau and the reserve deputy association manned the shelters. Valteau later voiced concerns about the city's hurricane preparedness, and he led a search and rescue team in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_001_005, TRT: 0:29:37 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. was the sheriff of Orleans Parish during Hurricane Katrina, and dedicated himself to the search and rescue effort in the days following the storm. He had limited communication for the first several days, and did not know the source of the rising water level. Valteau helped the state sheriff's association evacuate prisoners from the area jails. He recalls his frustration with the lack of federal preparedness, including the shortage of body bags. At this point in the interview, Valteau reflects upon the hurricane and the government's response. After twenty-eight years of public service, Valteau retired from his post as parish sheriff, and returned to the law practice of Valteau, Harris, Koenig and Mayer. At the time of the interview, he had agreed to represent workers who were injured in the BP oil rig explosion. Valteau talks about his two daughters and his wife, whom he met in law school. He also reflects upon his life, legacy and message to future generations.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_002_006, TRT: 6:31:29 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. joined the Coordinating Council of Greater New Orleans in 1962. He helped black residents register to vote, and participated in protests against segregated businesses. Due to the voter registration drives, black political power increased during the 1960s. In 1969, Moon Landrieu became the first white politician to seek the African American vote, by promising to end racially based employment discrimination within the city government. The National Football League's refusal to host games in segregated stadiums also prompted change within the city. Valteau continued his activism while a student at Dillard University, where he studied sociology and decided to pursue a career in law. After a pre-law program at the University of Cincinnati, Valteau enrolled at the Loyola University New Orleans College of Law. He was one of two African Americans in his class, and created a recruitment program that yielded twenty-four new black students in its first year.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_002_007, TRT: 7:30:19 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. completed pre-law courses through a program at the University of Cincinnati that aimed to prepare African American students for law school. He matriculated there, but found that his professors knew little about the State of Louisiana's civil code. After a few months, Valteau transferred to the Loyola University New Orleans College of Law. There, he founded a chapter of the Black American Law Students Association, which were uncommon at majority schools at the time. He also started a recruitment program to improve diversity at the college. During his first summer, he interned at the People's Action Center, where he helped represent the local Black Panther Party. Upon graduation, Valteau worked for two years at the New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation. He was then recruited by Louis Charbonnet III, who was one of a few recently elected black members of the Louisiana State Legislature, where Valteau spent three years as legal counsel to a joint committee.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_002_008, TRT: 8:31:40 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. joined the law firm of Gerty, Thierry and Valteau in 1976. It was the former firm of Ernest Morial, who pushed for black political representation during the 1960s alongside attorneys Robert F. Collins and Nils Douglas and the city's black businessmen and ministers. Valteau continued the firm's legacy by suing the City of New Orleans, which refused to comply with the redistricting requirements in the city charter to avoid creating a majority African American district. While the lawsuit was pending, A.L. Davis became the City of New Orleans' first black councilman. The city was forced to create an African American district in 1973, and Valteau ran for a seat in the state legislature in 1974. He lost the election, but became close friends with Ernest Morial in the process. When Morial ran for mayor in 1977, he asked Valteau to serve as his campaign manager. Despite their low campaign funds, Morial succeeded in the runoff and was elected mayor in October of 1977.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_002_009, TRT: 9:34:58 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. declined a position in the administration of New Orleans Mayor Ernest Morial, and returned to practicing law in 1978. In 1979, he entered the airport concessions business after noticing a small food vendor at the airport in Denver, Colorado. Valteau partnered with Ruth Ann Menutis to open a franchise of The Grove, Inc. in the New Orleans airport, and later opted to buy the entire business. In 1981, Valteau decided to run for sheriff of Orleans Parish. He ran a successful campaign, although he won only 29 percent of the white vote. Early in his term, Valteau reforming the previously mismanaged sheriff's office. He remained involved in the airport concessions industry, and helped found the Airport Minority Advisory Council in 1983. Profits dropped dramatically after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and Valteau sold his business in 2002. He later returned to the industry, partnering with Pinkberry and the Raising Cane's USA chicken manufacturer.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_002_010, TRT: 10:33:21 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. spearheaded legislation to standardize fee schedules across the sheriff's offices in the State of Louisiana. He was also asked to head the civil section of the Louisiana Sheriffs Association, where he created seminars and a handbook about changes affecting the association. As the sheriff of Orleans Parish, Valteau made real estate auctions more accessible to the public. He organized a group to speak to students about career opportunities, and coordinated job interview training and etiquette lessons in the public schools. In his private life, Valteau continued to work on his airport concessions business, and built a production facility and warehouse in Dallas, Texas. When Reverend Jesse L. Jackson announced his presidential bid in 1984, Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards refused to hold a presidential preference primary. Valteau participated in the lawsuit against the state government, which was eventually ordered by the U.S. Supreme Court to conduct the primary election.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_002_011, TRT: 11:31:20 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. served as the sheriff of Orleans Parish in Louisiana during New Orleans Mayor Ernest Morial's term, as well as the subsequent four administrations. Mayor Sidney Barthelemy succeeded Mayor Morial; and, although he lost some of the gains made by the black community, he made an effort to increase African American participation in government. Valteau considered running for mayor, but instead encouraged Morial's son, Marc H. Morial, and served as the younger Morial's campaign manager. As

mayor, Marc Morial focused on increasing African American access to government contracts. Valteau continued to serve as the parish sheriff, and was instrumental in Richard Pennington's appointment as police chief. In the following mayoral election, Pennington lost to Ray Nagin, the favorite of the white community. Additionally, Valteau was targeted for several wrongful investigations by the federal government, which suspected him of extortion and bribery because of his race.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr., Section
A2010_039_002_012, TRT: 12:24:05 ?

The Honorable Paul R. Valteau, Jr. became the first African American sheriff in the South since Reconstruction in 1982, when he was elected sheriff of Orleans Parish, Louisiana. He served in that position for twenty-eight years, including during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Despite Valteau's efforts, the storm devastated New Orleans's African American community, which lost much of its economic and political power. When Valteau decided to leave the sheriff's office, he trained Marlin N. Gusman to serve as his successor, and encouraged the government to merge the two sheriff's offices in the parish. Valteau returned to practicing law, and joined the Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation. He was selected as chairman of the New Orleans Bowl, and made the game profitable during his five-year tenure. Afterwards, Valteau was nominated to serve as chairman of the entire foundation. Valteau concludes the interview by describing the sights, sounds and smells of his childhood in New Orleans.