

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Billy Martin

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Martin, Billy, 1949-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Billy Martin,
Dates:	June 25, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	10 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:43:10).
Abstract:	Lawyer Billy Martin (1949 -) has defended many celebrity clients, including NBA star Allen Iverson, Monica Lewinsky and her mother, Chandra Levy's parents, football player Michael Vick, and Senator Larry Craig. He was ranked fourth in The Washingtonian's list of "Top Lawyers." Martin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 25, 2010, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_065
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Lawyer Billy Martin was born on October 29, 1949 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania One of eight children, in his youth he aspired to earn an M.B.A. degree and become a marketing executive. After receiving his B.A. degree from Howard University in 1973, he accepted a scholarship to study law at the University of Cincinnati, where he earned his J.D. in 1976. For the next fifteen years, Martin worked in various governmental positions. He served as assistant city prosecutor for the City of Cincinnati from 1976 to 1978; Assistant United States Attorney in the Southern District of Ohio from 1978 to 1980; Special Attorney in the Organized Crime Strike Force in San Francisco from 1980 to 1984; Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Columbia from 1984 to 1988; and Executive Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Columbia from 1988 to 1990.

In 1990, Martin began his private practice as a partner with Eckert Seamans in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which represented all three major Pittsburgh sports franchises. It was at this time that Martin got his start defending famous athletes, and it was at this time that the late Johnny Cochrane became Martin's mentor. In 1993, Martin defended NBA star Allen Iverson, before moving to the firm of William R. Martin & Associates in Washington, D.C. a year later. From 1997 to 2000, Martin worked as a partner in the litigation department of Manatt Phelps & Phillips, and in 1998, he defended Monica Lewinsky and her mother, Marcia Lewis, during President Clinton's impeachment proceedings. He managed block a second grand jury appearance by Lewis and obtain an offer of blanket immunity for Lewinsky. In 2000, Martin moved to the firm of Dyer Ellis & Joseph, which merged with Blank Rome in 2003. While at the firm, Martin defended Chandra Levy's parents in 2002, former NBA player Jayson Williams in 2004, and former Atlanta mayor Bill Campbell in 2004. From 2007 to 2009, Martin led the white-collar criminal defense group at Sutherland Asbill & Brennan, where in 2007 he defended football player Michael Vick on his dog fighting charges, and in 2008 he represented Senator Larry Craig in his effort to overturn his disorderly conduct conviction. In addition to his celebrity clients, however, Martin also worked to defend Fortune 500 companies. In May 2009, Martin joined Howrey LLP in their Washington, D.C. office, where he

heads the White Collar Criminal Defense Practice.

Ranked fourth in *The Washingtonian*'s list of "Top Lawyers" and selected as one of the *National Law Journal*'s "50 Most Influential Minority Attorneys," Martin is the recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award from both Howard University and University of Cincinnati College of Law. Martin currently lives in Washington, DC, with his children and wife, Michel Martin, an Emmy Award winning American journalist and correspondent for ABC News and National Public Radio.

Billy Martin was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 25, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Billy Martin was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 25, 2010, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 10 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Lawyer Billy Martin (1949 -) has defended many celebrity clients, including NBA star Allen Iverson, Monica Lewinsky and her mother, Chandra Levy's parents, football player Michael Vick, and Senator Larry Craig. He was ranked fourth in The Washingtonian's list of "Top Lawyers."

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:

Martin, Billy, 1949-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Martin, Billy, 1949- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Sutherland, Asbill and Brennan; Howard University; University of Cincinnati. Law Dept.

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 Billy Martin, June 25, 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 Billy Martin, Section A2010_065_001_001, TRT: 0:30:25 ?

Billy Martin was born on October 29, 1949 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His mother, Harriett Isabelle Martin, was born on February 25, 1919 in Sewickley, a wealthy suburb of Pittsburgh with a small community of African Americans who were primarily employed as servants to steel-industry magnates such as the Mellons and the Carnegies. Martin's maternal great-grandmother, whose family owned a farm in Virginia, moved her family to Sewickley. There, Martin's maternal grandmother worked as a domestic and his maternal grandfather had a small contracting business. Martin's father, Felton L. Martin, Sr., was born in Pelham, Georgia, in August 1916. While he was in high school, he moved from the segregated South to Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, where he worked at the Jones and Laughlin steel forging plant. Martin's parents met at a social gathering in Sewickley, courted for two years before getting married and having eight children. Martin attributes his work ethic to his father and his sense of etiquette to his mother.

Video Oral History Interview with Billy Martin, Section A2010_065_001_002, TRT: 0:26:58 ?

Billy Martin grew up in a multiethnic neighborhood in Sewickley, Pennsylvania where his family attended Triumph Baptist Church. He remembers wanting to ride on the handle bars of his older brother's bike. Sewickley was an integrated community in the 1950s and '60s, but African Americans were not allowed to use the local YMCA; in school, black students did not mingle socially with their white classmates; and the city's sewage treatment plant was built right next to the new black community center. Martin received encouragement from his preschool and third grade teachers at Sewickley Elementary School and was influenced by his role model, the community service center director. Martin excelled in athletics, but stopped playing football after a white coach at Quaker Valley Junior High School told him he could not be the quarterback. Martin entered the sports law arena when he joined a Pittsburgh law firm where the managing partner was the general manager of the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Video Oral History Interview with Billy Martin, Section A2010_065_001_003, TRT: 0:27:52 ?

Billy Martin attended Quaker Valley High School in Leetsdale, Pennsylvania where he played basketball, ran track and was on the college prep track, but earned low grades due to having a full-time job. Martin went to neighboring towns to socialize with other black youth and recalls the presence of the National Guard in Pittsburgh's Hill District following the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. A high school counselor tried to deter Martin from attending college and Martin was rejected the first time he applied to Howard University in Washington, D.C. After graduating high school in 1968, he attended Allegheny Community College for a year then gained admission to Howard in 1969. He worked during college and was mentored by HistoryMakers Joyce Ladner and Ronald Walters. Martin recalls the assassinations of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in 1969, and the impact of the Black Power movement. The father of Martin's first wife played for a Negro League baseball team in Pittsburgh.

Video Oral History Interview with Billy Martin, Section A2010_065_001_004, TRT: 0:29:53 ?

Billy Martin remembers writing term papers about the African Liberation Movement while at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and remembers the administration's attitude towards student protesters. Martin lacked role models

of African American lawyers, as a child, but became aware of prominent African American lawyers, such as Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall, when he entered Howard. An incident where he was rear ended by a lawyer influenced his decision to pursue a career in law. Martin married his first wife his junior year. In 1973, shortly after his first child was born, he graduated from Howard, and began law school at the University of Cincinnati in Cincinnati, Ohio. He describes the competitiveness of law school, being racially stereotyped as underprepared and participating in the Black Lawyers Association of Cincinnati. He interned for the Deputy Mayor of Cincinnati during law school, and upon graduation in 1976 he became one of the first African American city prosecutors in Cincinnati.

Video Oral History Interview with Billy Martin, Section A2010_065_001_005, TRT: 0:29:58 ?

Billy Martin's ambition to serve as a lawyer in the Department of Justice (DOJ) was influenced by his experiences being wrongfully stopped and searched by policemen as a youth and watching the proceedings of the Watergate hearings during law school. At his first job as assistant city prosecutor in Cincinnati, Ohio, Martin gained experience by prosecuting misdemeanor cases. In 1978, he was appointed as the assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, in Dayton, Ohio. When the presidential administration changed in 1980, he was retained at the DOJ as a trial lawyer for the Organized Crime Strike Force in San Francisco, California. During this time, Martin was involved in investigations of corruption in the construction of the Great American Pipeline in Alaska, and of the Chicago Outfit mafia in Chicago, Illinois. He also talks about his relationships with HistoryMakers Elijah Cummings, whom he knew at Howard University, and his mentor and colleague, Judge Nathaniel Jones.

Video Oral History Interview with Billy Martin, Section A2010_065_001_006, TRT: 0:28:49 ?

Billy Martin's team at the Organized Crime Strike Force in San Francisco, California, nearly indicted Allen Dorfman, a financial operator in Al Capone's Chicago, Illinois outfit; but, Dorfman was murdered in 1983, days prior to his indictment. Incidents such as these tightened arrest and bail proceedings in the criminal justice system. Martin indicted a labor union on corruption charges during the construction of the Great American Pipeline in Alaska. In 1984, Martin moved to the U.S. Attorney's office in Washington, D.C., spending weekends in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with his father who was dying from cancer. As head of a homicide unit in D.C., he saw the rise of the crack epidemic, the rise of gang-related homicides and the disillusioned teenage gangbangers. In 1988, he became the Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney for Operations in D.C. Martin believes that community policing no longer exists and compares contemporary gang organizations' reckless violence to the mafia's astute business practices.

Video Oral History Interview with Billy Martin, Section A2010_065_001_007, TRT: 0:28:36 ?

Billy Martin was Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney for Washington, D.C. from 1988 to 1990 had a high homicide rate. In 1990, dissatisfied with his pay as a government lawyer, Martin joined the D.C. offices of Eckert Seamans Cherin and Mellott, LLC, where he represented Pittsburgh professional sport teams and players, and established himself as a sports lawyer. Around the same time, Martin met lawyer Johnnie Cochran, who mentored him, and included him on high profile defense cases such as that of heavyweight boxing champion, Riddick Bowe. Through Georgetown University's basketball coach, John Thompson, Jr., Martin was introduced to sports agent David Falk, and landed basketball player Juwan Howard as a client. In 1994, he formed William R. Martin and Associates. His firm represented Monica Lewinsky's mother, Marcia

Lewis, during President Bill Clinton's impeachment proceedings. Martin also talks about Doug Williams' 1998 Super Bowl win, and the Allen Iverson's conviction in Virginia in 1993.

Video Oral History Interview with Billy Martin, Section A2010_065_001_008, TRT: 0:29:56 ?

Billy Martin was retained as the lead counsel for Monica Lewinsky's mother, Marcia Lewis, during President Bill Clinton's impeachment proceedings in 1998. Martin was later also asked to recommend counsel for Monica Lewinsky, and became a key part of her defense team. In 2000, Martin became partner in the litigation department of Dyer Ellis and Joseph, LLP, in Washington, D.C. Around the same time, following Cincinnati, Ohio's riots in 2000, he led an internal investigation of the Cincinnati police department's use of excessive force. At this time, he was contacted by Susan Levy, mother of Washington intern, Chandra Levy, to represent her and her husband, Robert Levy and investigate Chandra's disappearance. In 2004, Martin joined the legal team defending former Atlanta mayor, Bill Campbell, on racketeering, bribery and wire fraud charges. Martin reflects upon the Clinton Presidency and police brutality in urban settings.

Video Oral History Interview with Billy Martin, Section A2010_065_001_009, TRT: 0:28:44 ?

Billy Martin describes the high profile cases that he represented between 2004 and 2008. In 2004, Martin represented former mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, Bill Campbell on racketeering charges. Campbell was acquitted on these charges, and only received punitive charges on a gambling and tax evasion charge that he confessed to. Also in 2004, Martin represented retired basketball player Jayson Williams, who was acquitted on charges of accidental homicide. In 2007, he represented Michael Vick, and sought a fair sentencing in Vick's conviction on charges of dog fighting on his property; in 2008, Martin represented Senator Larry Craig who faced allegations of lewd conduct at an airport. In addition to his criminal litigation, Martin has also engaged in commercial and civil litigation, while a partner in the litigation department of Sutherland, Asbill and Brennan, LLP, where he defended Fortune 500 companies on claims of negligence and racial discrimination.

Video Oral History Interview with Billy Martin, Section A2010_065_001_010, TRT: 0:21:59 ?

Billy Martin initiated a class action lawsuit against a club in Cincinnati, Ohio, after he was denied admission to the club; at the time Martin was the only African American assistant prosecutor in the city. Martin has a successful law practice at Howrey, LLP and has been an active member of the National Bar Association (NBA), mentoring as well as serving as a role model for other African American lawyers. He is married to Michel Martin, a successful journalist and radio show host on National Public Radio (NPR). He has two daughters from his first marriage of twenty years, and twins from his marriage to Michel. Martin reflects upon his life, career and legacy. Martin describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community and how he would like to be remembered.