

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Earl Stafford

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Stafford, Earl, 1948-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Earl Stafford,
Dates:	April 30, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:22:17).
Abstract:	Entrepreneur Earl Stafford (1948 -) was the founder of UNITECH and The Stafford Foundation. He organized the Peoples Inaugural Project, which allowed more than 400 disadvantaged individuals to participate in President Barack Obama's first inauguration. Stafford was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 30, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_075
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Philanthropist and business executive Earl W. Stafford was born in Mount Holly Township, New Jersey on May 14, 1948 to Mabel (née Willis) and Robert E. Stafford. After graduating from high school, Stafford enrolled in the United States Air Force to become an air traffic controller. He went on to have a distinguished twenty-year career in the U.S. military which included service as the assistant Air Force Liaison Officer to the Federal Aviation Administration. During his time in the Air Force, Stafford enrolled at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst and graduated with a B.S. degree in 1976. He then obtained his M.B.A. degree in business from Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville in 1984. Stafford is also a graduate of the OPM Executive Program at Harvard Business School and holds several honorary doctorate degrees.

In 1988, Stafford founded Universal Systems & Technology, Inc. (UNITECH), a training and information technology company. During his twenty one years as UNITECH's chairman and chief executive officer, the company accrued millions of dollars in revenue and was recognized as one of the top minority businesses in information technology. In 2009, Stafford sold the company to defense technology corporation Lockheed Martin. Additionally, Stafford founded The Stafford Foundation, a faith-based, philanthropic organization in 2002. The foundation is credited for "The People's Inaugural Project" initiative, which brought more than 400 disadvantaged and underserved individuals to Washington, D.C. for a three-day celebration of President Barack Obama's historic inauguration. Two years later, Stafford teamed with actor and comedian Bill Cosby for the Doing Good campaign, a national philanthropic initiative. Stafford is also chief executive officer of The Wentworth Group, LLC, a Reston, Virginia-based holding company providing financial and business support services.

Stafford has garnered numerous honors for his accomplishments in business and the social service sector. He received the "Candle in the Dark" award from Morehouse College in 2012 and the Crystal Stair award at the Uncommon Heights Awards in 2011. In 2010, he was the recipient of the Horatio Alger Award. The Washington,

D.C. Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP/DC) honored Stafford with the Outstanding Philanthropist Award during its National Capital Philanthropy Day celebration in 2009. The Salvation Army of Greater New York honored him with its first "Stand Together" Award during its 62nd Annual Luncheon. Stafford and his foundation were honored by the Tennessee State Legislature, which authored a joint resolution recognizing the efforts of The People's Inaugural Project in January 2009.

Stafford serves on the Boards of the Horatio Alger Association, the Wesley Theological Seminary, the Apollo Theater Foundation, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Morehouse College Board of Trustees, and the Morehouse College – Andrew Young Center for Global Leadership and Africare. He also received a Presidential appointment to the President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Stafford and his wife Amanda reside in McLean, Virginia.

Earl W. Stafford was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 30, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Earl Stafford was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 30, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Entrepreneur Earl Stafford (1948 -) was the founder of UNITECH and The Stafford Foundation. He organized the Peoples Inaugural Project, which allowed more than 400 disadvantaged individuals to participate in President Barack Obama's first inauguration.

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:

Stafford, Earl, 1948-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Stafford, Earl, 1948- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Entrepreneur

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 Earl Stafford, April 30, 2012. 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 Stafford, Section A2012_075_001_001, TRT: 1:31:42 ?

Earl Stafford was born on May 14, 1948 in Mount Holly, New Jersey to Robert Stafford and Mabel Willis Stafford. His paternal great-great-grandfather, William Stafford, was a freed slave who fled from persecution in Delaware. His descendants settled in Mount Holly, New Jersey, where Stafford's father was born in 1906. He worked as a farm laborer until meeting Stafford's mother, who was born in Ruther Glen, Virginia to William Henry Willis and Jennie Willis in 1912. Stafford's maternal family migrated north to New Jersey, where his maternal grandfather found work at the Campbell Soup Company and helped Stafford's father secure a position in the canning department. Stafford's parents settled in the African American section of Mount Holly, where his mother raised twelve children, of whom Stafford was the youngest boy. She also worked as a domestic for white families, and brought home magazines like National Geographic, Look and Life, which influenced Stafford's early aspirations.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Stafford, Section A2012_075_001_002, TRT: 2:30:05 ?

Earl Stafford grew up in Mount Holly, New Jersey, where the African American community was located on a hill near the railroad tracks. There, his family was one of the first households to install indoor plumbing, and purchased their first television set in 1953, although Stafford preferred to play baseball in his free time. His father was an assistant pastor at the Second Baptist Church, which was founded by Stafford's paternal ancestors in 1904. There, Stafford attended the Baptist Training Union and Sunday school, and was a member of the choir. Stafford learned about entrepreneurialism at an early age, when a neighbor recruited him to help sell snacks during the summer. He later secured a job at Carter's Grocery Store, where he worked for five years. At Rancocas Valley Regional High School, Stafford was encouraged by his homeroom teacher, Mr. Powell; and, because of his strong Spanish language skills, was once selected to translate for a visiting official from South America.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Stafford, Section A2012_075_001_003, TRT: 3:29:31 ?

Earl Stafford's older brother, Eugene Stafford, was the first African American police chief in Mount Holly, New Jersey. There, Stafford attended the integrated Rancocas Valley Regional High School, where he played sports and belonged to the Spanish club, debate club and football club. He also worked at Carter's Grocery Store, a moving company and as a busser at a Howard Johnson's restaurant. In 1966, Stafford graduated from high school and secured a position at the U.S. Postal Office Department. He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1967, and was sent to attend air traffic control school at the Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi, where he experienced southern segregation for the first time. Stafford was then stationed at the Takhli Air Base in Thailand, where he was reprimanded for reading Black Power texts and learning Swahili; and at the Homestead Air Reserve Base in Florida, where he learned of the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Stafford, Section A2012_075_001_004, TRT: 4:29:09 ?

Earl Stafford served as an air traffic controller in the U.S. Air Force, where he witnessed the influence of the Black Power movement on the African American

enlisted men. After returning from Thailand in 1970, Stafford was sent to Rome, New York, and then married his wife, Amanda Boardley Stafford, with whom he returned to New Jersey. He decided to pursue his education while stationed at the Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst in Trenton, New Jersey; and, in 1974, was awarded a scholarship to attend the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he majored in business administration. In the aftermath of the air traffic control strike of 1981, Stafford was selected to fill a position in the U.S. Department of the Air Force at the Pentagon in Washington D.C. There, he completed graduate and M.B.A. degrees at the satellite campuses of the Air Command and Staff College and Southern Illinois University. After twenty years of service, Stafford retired from the U.S. Air Force and founded a private contracting company.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Stafford, Section A2012_075_001_005, TRT: 5:29:17 ?

Earl Stafford founded Universal Systems and Technology Inc. (UNITECH) in 1988. In its early stages, the company focused on air traffic systems development, and competed for government and private contracts. Stafford worked with The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Hubble Space Telescope, the Defense Nuclear Agency and the Resolution Trust Corporation, with whom he secured his first multi-million dollar contract in the early 1990s. Through these projects, the firm expanded to include software development and nuclear engineering consulting services. At this point in the interview, Stafford talks about his business model and the importance of hard work. He was highly successful; and, in 2002, established The Stafford Foundation to provide assistance to disadvantaged communities. In 2009, Stafford sold UNITECH to Lockheed Martin. From that time, he focused his efforts on The Stafford Foundation and The Wentworth Group LLC, a private equity firm that invested in small and minority businesses.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Stafford, Section A2012_075_001_006, TRT: 6:29:06 ?

Earl Stafford established The Stafford Foundation in 2002 as a charitable, faith based organization committed to serving underprivileged communities across the globe. The foundation worked with groups like Habitat for Humanity, and developed projects like Give Before You Get, which assisted homeless shelters during the holidays. In 2009, The Stafford Foundation organized the Peoples Inauguration Project, which helped people from disadvantaged communities attend the inauguration of President Barack Obama. For the event, Stafford hosted over 400 guests at the JW Marriot hotel in Washington, D.C. The Peoples Inauguration Project was a major success, and attracted the attention of President Obama, who commended Stafford for his efforts. Shortly after the inauguration, Stafford began developing the foundation's Doing Good campaign. In January 2010, he was onboard a flight to meet with television executives about the campaign, and apprehended a distressed passenger who attempted to open the plane's cockpit.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Stafford, Section A2012_075_001_007, TRT: 7:23:27 ?

Earl Stafford was the founder of The Stafford Foundation, a faith based charity headquartered in Reston, Virginia. Following the success of the foundation's People Inauguration Project in 2009, Stafford was approached by Bill Cosby, who offered his assistance with Stafford's next project. Together, they created the Doing Good campaign to encourage people to give back to their communities. At this point in the interview, Stafford describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community and the United States. He also reflects upon his life and legacy, his religious faith and how he would like to be remembered. Stafford concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Stafford, Section A2012_075_Stafford_Earl_06_MED_001,
TRT: 0:02:59 ?

In honor of BusinessMakers: Breakout Leaders July, we salute technology entrepreneur and philanthropist Earl W. Stafford, who speaks about his career and how his love of business began.