

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Hattie Carwell

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Carwell, Hattie
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Hattie Carwell,
Dates:	November 5, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:17:03).
Abstract:	Environmental scientist Hattie Carwell (1948 -) was a health physicist for the United States Atomic Energy Commission and the International Atomic Agency. Carwell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 5, 2012, in San Francisco, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_239
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Physicist Hattie Carwell was born on July 17, 1948 in Brooklyn, New York. Carwell grew up in a nurturing black community in Ashland, Virginia, which encouraged her interest in science. After graduating from high school in 1966, she enrolled at Bennett College for Women. Carwell earned her B.S. degree in chemistry from Bennett College in 1971. She went on to earn her M.S. degree in health physics from Rutgers University in 1971.

Throughout her career, Carwell has worked nationally and internationally for the U.S. Department of Energy and the International Atomic Energy Agency as a health physicist and nuclear safeguards group leader. From 1980 to 1985, she went on leave to Vienna, Austria where she served as a nuclear safeguards inspector and group leader at the International Atomic Energy Agency. In 1990, she became a program manager for high energy and nuclear programs with the DOE San Francisco Operations Office. She then became a senior facility operations engineer at the Berkeley Site Office in 1992. In 1994, Carwell was promoted to operations lead at the Berkeley Site Office, a position which she held until 2006. She became a senior physical scientist before retiring in 2008.

Carwell has written numerous research articles and two books including, *Blacks in Science: Astrophysicist to Zoologist*. Carwell is a Board Member of the Northern California Council of Black Professional Engineers, an organization of which she is a past President. She is treasurer for the National Council of Black Engineers and Scientists, co-founder and chair of the Development Fund for Black Students in Science and Technology, and Director of the Museum of African American Technology (MAAT) Science Village. MAAT Science Village archives information on the achievements of Africa American in science and engineering.

Carwell is the recipient of numerous performance awards from the Department of Energy, and is recognized as a community leader. She is a distinguished alumna of Bennett College and included in the Black College Hall of Fame. Her achievements are annotated in biographical

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Hattie Carwell was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 5, 2012, in San Francisco, California, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Environmental scientist Hattie Carwell (1948 -) was a health physicist for the United States Atomic Energy Commission and the International Atomic Agency.

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:

Carwell, Hattie

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Carwell, Hattie--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Department of Energy

Occupations:

Environmental Scientist

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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 Hattie Carwell, November 5, 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 Hattie Carwell, Section A2012_239_001_001, TRT: 1:29:07 ?
Hattie Carwell describes her family background. Carwell was born in 1948 in Brooklyn, New York. Carwell can trace her mother's side of the family to the 1850s. Her mother, Francis Tunstall, was born in 1917 in Hanover County, Virginia. Her great grandmother, Edmonia Woodson Tunstall, was nine years old when the Civil War took place. Francis Tunstall lived in Virginia until her

mother died in 1935, and then went to join her sisters and aunt in New York City. Her father, George Carwell Jr., was born in 1920 in Orangeburg, South Carolina. He lived in New York until he died in 1973 after having a seizure and being subsequently struck by a subway train. Carwell lived in New York with her parents until age four, when she went to Virginia to be raised by her uncle, Patrick Tunstall.

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Video Oral History Interview with Hattie Carwell, Section A2012_239_001_002, TRT: 2:29:06 ?

Hattie Carwell talks about her family. Her father, a truck driver, served in the U.S. Army. He met his wife, Fannie Carwell, in New York after the World War II. George and Fannie Carwell had seven children. Carwell lived in New York until age four, when she went to Ashland, Virginia to be raised by her uncle and his wife. In Ashland, Carwell was raised on a working farm. Carwell attended John Manuel Gandy High School for first grade through twelfth grade. She remembers Ruth Giles, who made an impact on her. Carwell took an early interest in math and science, and was often selected to represent her school in science competitions. She was active in the Shiloh Baptist church, and served as the church secretary. She also sang in the church choir. Carwell took every opportunity to be in leadership roles, both at her school and at her church.

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Video Oral History Interview with Hattie Carwell, Section A2012_239_001_003, TRT: 3:29:55 ?

Hattie Carwell describes her life as a child. She describes herself as a mischievous child, and tells the story of breaking into her church. She also recalls disturbing other students at school. Carwell was raised by her uncle, Patrick, and his wife. The family did not have a lot of money, but made sure that she had everything she needed for school. She attended John Manuel Gandy High School, and performed very well academically. During Carwell's school years, the nation was in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement. Carwell remembers the boycotts, sit-ins, and protests of that time, but did not take part in them. Though she was not active in the Civil Rights Movement, she was very interested in civil rights, current events, and history. Carwell also demonstrated an early interest in science. She recalls presenting her projects in science competitions in neighboring counties.

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Video Oral History Interview with Hattie Carwell, Section A2012_239_001_004, TRT: 4:29:16 ?

Hattie Carwell talks about her education and the field of radiation science. Carwell graduated as valedictorian from John Manuel Gandy High School in

1966. Upon graduation, Carwell enrolled in Bennett College, a historically black college for women. At Bennett College, her favorite teacher was Dr. John Henry Sayles, her chemistry teacher. In 1970, Carwell graduated with her B.S. degree in biology and chemistry. Initially, Carwell wanted to attend graduate school in California, but this was not possible financially. She then went to Rutgers University when she was offered a fellowship to study radiation science. At Rutgers University, Carwell was mentored by Dr. Haughey. She completed her M.S. degree in radiation physics and began working for the Atomic Energy Commission, where she studied the effects of radiation on health.

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Video Oral History Interview with Hattie Carwell, Section A2012_239_001_005, TRT: 5:28:37 ?

Hattie Carwell describes the precautions and systems in place to prevent exposure to radiation. She describes the effects of exposure, which include immune system failure, radiation sickness, and even death. Carwell then discusses her career. She graduated from Rutgers University with her M.S. degree in health physics in 1971. Her master's thesis examined the level of radioactive exposure of the survivors of the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. She then did an internship at Brookhaven National Laboratory. Following her internship, Carwell worked briefly at Thomas Jefferson University. She worked as a research assistant in Dr. Leeper's lab, studying the effects of tumors on bone marrow cells. Carwell then returned to Brookhaven National Laboratories.

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Video Oral History Interview with Hattie Carwell, Section A2012_239_001_006, TRT: 6:29:51 ?

Hattie Carwell describes her work with the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), which she joined in 1973 as a junior health physicist. Carwell describes the unsafe and improper procedures that were in place at the AEC. That same year, her father was killed in New York City. Carwell requested a transfer to California, where she enjoyed a good working relationship with her boss. She also began a Ph.D. program at the University of California, Berkeley. She worked under Robert Latimer while she took classes. At this time, her aunt in Virginia became ill. When she died, Carwell dropped out of her Ph.D. program, but continued to take some courses. Carwell then went to Vienna, Austria, to work for the International Atomic Energy Agency. During this time, Carwell took frequent trips to places like Russia, England, and Greece.

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Video Oral History Interview with Hattie Carwell, Section A2012_239_001_007, TRT: 7:29:34 ?

Hattie Carwell talks about her work with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). She became a group leader for her second year there. Though she had an additional five years in her contract, Carwell returned to the United States in 1985. She worked for the Department of Energy, and then was stationed in Rocky Flats, Colorado where she worked with the Rocky Flats plants. The Rocky Flats facility was raided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation after allegations of mismanagement, negligence, and criminal activity. Carwell then went on to become the program manager for the High Energy and Nuclear Programs in the Department of Energy in Oakland, California.

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Video Oral History Interview with Hattie Carwell, Section A2012_239_001_008, TRT: 8:30:06 ?

Hattie Carwell talks about her efforts to increase the number of African Americans in the sciences. In 1977, she published a book entitled 'Blacks in Science.' In her book, she features prominent scientists, such as Dr. Warren Henry, Ernest Just, and David Blackwell. Carwell describes the profound impact that Dr. Warren Henry had on her. Carwell also founded the Developmental Fund for Black Students in Science and Technology. This fund provides scholarships for African American students studying at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The fund's supporters include Omar Spurlock, George Carruthers, Donald Hinson, Julian Earls, and Takesa Anderson. Carwell later founded the Museum for African American Technology Science Village, which is a science museum with an African American focus.

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Video Oral History Interview with Hattie Carwell, Section A2012_239_001_009, TRT: 9:21:31 ?

Hattie Carwell describes the Museum for African American Technology Science Village (MAAT). The museum is focused around educating people about the contributions of black scientists. The MAAT is currently a traveling exhibit, but Carwell hopes to have a permanent location for the MAAT. In addition to her passion for educating people about African Americans in the sciences, Carwell is passionate about protecting the environment. She has written several papers that focus on going green and has committed to living green; she has solar panels on her home. Carwell also shares her concerns for the African American community. She feels that a lot of unrealized potential resides within children regardless of their grades. Carwell would like to be remembered as a strong person that pursued her own interests.

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