

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Steve Baskerville

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Baskerville, Steve
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Steve Baskerville,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 24, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:02:26).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Television personality and weatherman Steve Baskerville (1950 - ) was hired by CBS in 1984, making him the first African American network weatherman. In 1987, he joined WBBM-Channel 2 in Chicago, Illinois where he earned several local Emmy Awards. Baskerville was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 24, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_238
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Broadcast meteorologist Steve Baskerville was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1950. He attended the School of Communications and Theater at Temple University and graduated from there in 1972 with his B.S. degree in communications. Later, in 2006, Baskerville earned a certificate in broadcast meteorology from Mississippi State University. He received his American Meteorological Society (AMS) Seal of Approval in 2007.

In 1972, Baskerville began his broadcasting career and was hired by the Philadelphia School District Office of Curriculum where he hosted a children's show on public radio. He then joined KYW-TV, the NBC affiliate in Philadelphia, from 1977 to 1984. While there, Baskerville worked as a weatherman, co-hosted a morning talk show with Maurice "Maury" Povich, and hosted a daily children's program which was honored by Action for Children's Television. In 1984, Baskerville was hired by CBS as a broadcast meteorologist on their "Morning News" segment, making him the first African American network weatherman. Then, in 1987, he became the weatherman for WBBM-Channel 2 in Chicago, Illinois.

Baskerville's interest in children's programming led him to host a two-hour special, "Dealing with Dope." He also co-hosted a children's issues program for WCBS-TV titled, "What If." In addition, Baskerville has displayed his diverse skills by hosting projects such as "Thanks to Teachers," a salute to area educators; "Taste of the Taste," a half-hour live broadcast from the Taste of Chicago; the "All-City Jamboree," a high school talent competition; and "Beautiful Babies," a public service campaign.

Baskerville has been honored for excellence throughout his career. In 1999, he won an Emmy Award for the news feature series, "Best of Chicago"; and, in 2001, he was honored by the Illinois Broadcasters Association for "Best Weather Segment." Baskerville served as host for CBS 2 Chicago's Emmy-Award winning program, "Sunday! With Steve Baskerville!" He received local Emmy Awards for his work on CBS 2's 2004 broadcast of the LaSalle Bank of Chicago Marathon, and his coverage of the deadly tornado in Utica, Illinois in 2004. In addition, he

received an Emmy Award in 2005 for the news feature, “Steve’s Getaway Guide.” In 2006, Baskerville earned several more local Emmy Awards including the “Outstanding Achievement for Individual Excellence.”

Baskerville and his wife live in Glenview, Illinois. They have two children: Aaron Baskerville and Sheena Baskerville.

Steve Baskerville was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* August 24, 2013.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Steve Baskerville was conducted by Thomas Jefferson on August 24, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Television personality and weatherman Steve Baskerville (1950 - ) was hired by CBS in 1984, making him the first African American network weatherman. In 1987, he joined WBBM-Channel 2 in Chicago, Illinois where he earned several local Emmy Awards.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Baskerville, Steve

Jefferson, Thomas (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Baskerville, Steve--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Television Personality

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Weatherman

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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## 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 Steve Baskerville, August 24, 2013. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Steve Baskerville, Section A2013\_238\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:22 ?

Steve Baskerville was born on May 12, 1950 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His mother, Mary Baskerville, was born on April 23, 1917 in Lincolnton, North Carolina and grew up in the segregated South where she experienced bigotry. She worked as an elementary school teacher and then at Sears Roebuck and Company and John Wanamaker department stores in Philadelphia. His father, Herman Baskerville, was born circa 1917 to John and Lula Baskerville in Richmond, Virginia and was one of twelve children. His parents met in Atlantic City, New Jersey in the 1930s and had their first child in 1938. When Baskerville was eleven years old, his father, an artistic and outgoing man, died of complications from epilepsy. Baskerville shares memories of his maternal grandmother, Lula Carson, and his mother. Both were widows who worked hard to raise their families on their own and inspired Baskerville's work ethic. Baskerville also remembers his uncles serving as role models after his father passed away.

Video Oral History Interview with Steve Baskerville, Section A2013\_238\_001\_002, TRT: 2:32:04 ?

Steve Baskerville shares his childhood memories of breaking his baby bottle and singing President Dwight Eisenhower's advertising jingle, "I Like Ike." As part of the All-City Boys Choir in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Baskerville met President Herbert Hoover. Baskerville's family consisted mainly of his mother, because his father died and his sister, Sylvia, was much older. However, he was constantly surrounded by visiting friends and relatives. Growing up in an ethnically diverse neighborhood, Baskerville remembers playing half ball, waiting for the "Water Ice" man's truck and going to Mr. Weinstein's grocery to get a slice of the meat featured on the "The Soupy Sales Show" each Saturday. His family took bus trips to visit North Carolina during the summer. Baskerville attended two elementary schools and entered a smile competition. He attended Overbrook High School, known for its talented alumni including Bill Cosby, Kenny Bluford, HistoryMaker Guion Bluford's brother, Bobby Hayes and Mongo Santamaria.

Video Oral History Interview with Steve Baskerville, Section A2013\_238\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:37 ?

Steve Baskerville talks about the gang turf wars he encountered on his route to Philadelphia's Shoemaker Junior High School and feeling protected because of the notoriety of his Uncle Bill's barbershop in the community. Baskerville describes the strong basketball tradition of Overbrook High School which produced Wilt Chamberlain, Walt Hazzard, and Wali Jones; the strict teachers; and being a good student. Baskerville played football, sang in the choir, went to house parties, and attended a Presbyterian church. He also shares stories of entering a smile contest, asking a girl to the prom without knowing that she already had a date, dating a female basketball player, paying protection dues to an older student, and taking a field trip to Washington D.C. Despite a guidance counselor advising Baskerville to become a mechanic, he aspired to attend college and become a lawyer. Baskerville was influenced by Philadelphia Civil Rights activists Cecil B. Moore, Hardy Williams, and Oscar Gaskins.

Video Oral History Interview with Steve Baskerville, Section A2013\_238\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:37

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Steve Baskerville describes the political climate of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania under Mayor Frank Rizzo during the 1960s, the Vietnam War, and the assassinations of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy. Baskerville recalls experiencing police harassment in Philadelphia. Baskerville's father served in the Pacific during World War II. After graduating from Overbrook High School in 1967, Baskerville attended Temple University in Philadelphia and recalls first encountering Temple's basketball coach, John Chaney, as his gym teacher at Shoemaker Junior High School. Baskerville also recalls seeing the "Last Poets" and black pride on Temple's campus. He changed his major from political science after Joe Terry told him about the theater and communications major. Baskerville graduated from Temple in 1972 with a B.S. degree in communications and was hired by the Philadelphia School District Office of Curriculum where he hosted a children's show on public radio.

Video Oral History Interview with Steve Baskerville, Section A2013\_238\_001\_005, TRT: 5:30:58  
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Steve Baskerville talks about his early broadcasting career starting in children's television programming as producer and host of "Expressway" and "Troll Train." Baskerville then worked as a co-host of two Philadelphia-based shows called "Evening Magazine" and "AM-PM" with Maury Povich. In 1977, the General Manager at the NBC station told Baskerville encouraged Baskerville to be a weatherman. Baskerville studied with Drexel's Dean of Science, Dr. Francis Davis, to learn the basics of meteorology. Baskerville remembers Don King telling him that he had never seen a black weatherman before. Baskerville remembers meeting a number of celebrities who appeared on "The Mike Douglas Show" and talks about how long it takes for news personalities to be recognized in public. In 1984, Baskerville was hired by CBS as a broadcast meteorologist on their "Morning News" segment, making him the first African American network weatherman. Then, in 1987, he became the weatherman for WBBM-Channel 2 in Chicago, Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Steve Baskerville, Section A2013\_238\_001\_006, TRT: 6:30:45  
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Steve Baskerville remembers the celebrities who appeared on the CBS Morning Show including Rock Hudson, Frank Sinatra, Jon Voight, and Henry Kissinger. Baskerville decided to join WBBM-Channel 2 in Chicago, Illinois in 1987 as the weekend weatherman which eventually led to becoming the weekday weatherman. Baskerville talks about how the move to Chicago affected his wife, Janice, and their two children, Aaron and Sheena. During his first year in Chicago, Baskerville reported on Mayor Harold Washington's death and HistoryMaker Eugene Sawyer's battle to become mayor. At WBBM, Baskerville worked with Bill Kurtis and Walter Jacobson. Lester Holt and HistoryMakers John Davis and Dorothy Tucker were the three major black broadcasters in the Chicago market, and the debut of The Oprah Winfrey Show brought massive ratings to the ABC affiliate. Baskerville talks about the importance of peer acceptance and having an authentic personality off-camera. He describes the major weather stories he covered in Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Steve Baskerville, Section A2013\_238\_001\_007, TRT: 7:32:02  
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Steve Baskerville talks about "The Mike Douglas" show. He also talks about the secret of his career and longevity at WBBM being never aligning too closely with any one manager. Baskerville hosted a variety show called "Sunday with Steve Baskerville" and produced a number of non-weather related programming.

Baskerville lists Rick James, Bill Clinton, Al Gore, HistoryMaker Barack Obama, Ted Williams, and Henry Kissinger among the most interesting people he has met. Baskerville talks about winning nine Emmy Awards. He also received a certificate in broadcast meteorology from Mississippi State University. He comments on global warming and recounts the controversies that Harry Porterfield and Dorothy Tucker faced as black journalists in Chicago, Illinois and Operation PUSH's advocacy for them. Finally, he talks about HistoryMaker Jim Tilmon being replaced at WLS in 1993.

Video Oral History Interview with Steve Baskerville, Section A2013\_238\_001\_008, TRT: 8:29:01  
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Steve Baskerville describes the wage gap between African American female broadcasters and male broadcasters as evidenced by the controversy surrounding HistoryMaker Felicia Middlebrooks in Chicago, Illinois. Baskerville names his heroes and they include Philadelphia TV salesman Lonnie Mitchell as well as his own mother. He talks about the career success of his son, Aaron Baskerville, his future plans, hopes and concerns for the African American community, and his own legacy. Baskerville concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.