

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Henry W. McGee

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	McGee, Henry W.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Henry W. McGee,
Dates:	September 22, 2016
Bulk Dates:	2016
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:41:18).
Abstract:	Broadcast executive Henry W. McGee (1953 -) worked at HBO Home Entertainment for over thirty-five years, where he served as president from 1995 to 2014. He then became a senior lecturer at Harvard Business School. McGee was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 22, 2016, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2016_025
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Broadcast executive Henry W. McGee was born on January 22, 1953 in Chicago, Illinois to Henry McGee Jr. and Catherine Williams. At the age of sixteen, McGee moved with his father to Los Angeles, California, and attended Palisades High School in Pacific Palisades, California until his junior year when he received early admission to Harvard University. McGee earned his B.A. degree in social studies magna cum laude in 1974. Later he received his M.B.A. degree from Harvard Business School in 1979.

McGee worked as a writer for *Newsweek* from 1974 to 1977 in New York and Washington D.C. After he obtained his M.B.A. degree, he was hired as a manager of film acquisition for Home Box Office (HBO), which was then a new venture at Time, Inc. McGee went on to serve as director of program acquisition for Time-Life Films from 1980 to 1981, director of Cinemax Program Planning and HBO Family Programming from 1981 to 1983, director of HBO Enterprises from 1983 to 1985, vice president of home video from 1985 to 1988, and senior vice president of programming for HBO Video from 1988 to 1995. In March of 1995, McGee was promoted to president of HBO Home Entertainment. Under his leadership, HBO became the leading force in the TV-to-DVD industry and a pioneer in using the Internet for marketing and sales. After retiring from HBO in 2013, McGee joined the faculty of Harvard Business School as a senior lecturer.

In 2004, McGee was elected to the board of AmerisourceBergen, the global pharmaceutical services company, and in 2017 was named chairman of the company's Governance and Nominating Committee. In 2015, he joined the board of TEGNA, Inc., a broadcast and digital media company that owns the largest number of affiliates of the NBC television network. McGee also served on several nonprofit boards, including as director of the Black Filmmaker Foundation board since 1985, and the Pew Research Center board since 2014. He also served as director and president of the Film Society of Lincoln Center board, and the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater Foundation board. He served as a director of the boards of the Save the Children Fund, the Time Warner Foundation, Studio Museum in Harlem, and the Sundance Institute. Additionally, McGee served on the advisory board of Harvard

University's Hutchins Center for African & African American Research.

McGee was inducted into *Variety's* Home Entertainment Hall of Fame, and the National Association of Minorities in Communication Hall of Fame. He also received the Professional Achievement Award from the Harvard Business School African American Alumni Association, and was named by *Black Enterprise* as one of the "50 Most Powerful African Americans in the Entertainment Business." In 2018 the National Association of Corporate Directors named McGee one of the 100 most influential people in the boardroom community.

McGee and his wife, Celia, have one daughter, Honor.

Henry W. McGee was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 22, 2016.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Henry W. McGee was conducted by Harriette Cole on September 22, 2016, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Broadcast executive Henry W. McGee (1953 -) worked at HBO Home Entertainment for over thirty-five years, where he served as president from 1995 to 2014. He then became a senior lecturer at Harvard Business School.

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:

McGee, Henry W.

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
McGee, Henry W.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Professor

Broadcast Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers|MediaMakers

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 Henry W. McGee, September 22, 2016. 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 Henry W. McGee, Section A2016_025_001_001, TRT: 1:31:19
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Henry W. McGee was born on January 22, 1953 in Chicago, Illinois to Catherine Fulton Williams and Henry W. McGee, Jr. His paternal grandfather, Henry W. McGee, Sr., was born in Hillsboro, Texas, and grew up in Kansas City, Missouri. After finishing high school, he moved to Chicago and began working at the post office. At night, he earned a bachelor's degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology. McGee's father attended Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, and joined the Associated Negro Press upon graduation. He later graduated from the DePaul University College of Law, and became an attorney. During this time, McGee's paternal grandfather advocated for equal rights in the postal union, and became the head of the local NAACP. In 1966, after thirty years at the post office, McGee's grandfather became Chicago's first African American postmaster. McGee's mother was born to a family of sharecroppers in Mount Airy, North Carolina. They came to Chicago when she was eight years old.

Video Oral History Interview with Henry W. McGee, Section A2016_025_001_002, TRT: 2:28:48
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Henry W. McGee grew up in Chicago, Illinois, where his father, Henry W. McGee, Jr., was an attorney at the federal Legal Services Program. When McGee was five years old, his parents divorced, and he moved with his mother and younger brother to his maternal grandparents' home in Maywood, Illinois. He remained close with his father, who continued to live in Chicago. McGee attended Washington Elementary School in Maywood until 1963, when his mother remarried. At that time, they joined McGee's stepfather, Madison Williams, in Gary, Indiana. There, McGee's family lived in a development called Tarrytown, which was built for African American veterans, and McGee enrolled at Alain L. Locke Elementary School. When he was sixteen years old, McGee moved with his father to Los Angeles, California. There, his father became the first African American professor at the University of California Los Angeles School of Law. He also headed the university's nascent black studies program, and helped defend Angela Davis.

Video Oral History Interview with Henry W. McGee, Section A2016_025_001_003, TRT: 3:31:01
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Henry W. McGee was bused to a wealthy white neighborhood to attend Horace Mann High School in Gary, Indiana. At the suggestion of a classmate, McGee enrolled in the summer program at the Mount Herman School for Boys. There, he found out that students were occasionally admitted to college prior to their high school graduation. The following year, McGee moved to Los Angeles, California, and secured admission to Harvard University as a high school junior. He aspired to become a journalist, and joined The Harvard Crimson, where he met his wife and was mentored by Lee A. Daniels. McGee interned at Newsweek magazine in Los Angeles, where he received guidance from John L. Dotson, Jr. The following summer, he interned with at the Newsweek bureau in London, where he met Henry Louis "Skip" Gates, Jr., who was an intern at Time magazine. Upon graduation, McGee joined the Newsweek office in New York City. He soon transferred to Washington, D.C., where he became a

correspondent under bureau chief Mel Elfin.

Video Oral History Interview with Henry W. McGee, Section A2016_025_001_004, TRT: 4:29:50
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Henry W. McGee reported on Capitol Hill and the White House as a correspondent at the Washington, D.C. bureau of Newsweek magazine. After a few years, he decided to pursue a career in publishing, and enrolled at Harvard Business School. Upon graduating in 1979, McGee was invited to join the publisher training program at Time, Inc. He was also offered a position at one of the company's subsidiaries, a home video company called Home Box Office (HBO). McGee became one of nine M.B.A. graduates to join HBO, and was tasked with negotiating for the rights to independent and foreign language films. The company originally focused on providing access to feature films and sports events in the home, and its early investment in entertainment companies like Miramax helped support the emerging independent film industry. McGee also helped manage HBO's financial interests after facilitating a joint venture with the British company Thorn EMI.

Video Oral History Interview with Henry W. McGee, Section A2016_025_001_005, TRT: 5:29:56
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Henry W. McGee was named president of Home Box Office (HBO) in the mid-1990s, as video rental stores started to encroach on the home video market. In response, HBO began producing original series like 'Sex and the City' and 'The Sopranos.' During the same period, Hollywood shifted its focus to big budget movies, and HBO began commissioning smaller and lesser known filmmakers to create content. HBO also produced several history specials on African Americans like Dorothy Dandridge and Josephine Baker. During his presidency, McGee focused on expanding HBO overseas, and used digital distribution to make international releases more cost effective. By the mid-2000s, McGee noticed a national interest in corporate ethics, and began developing a business ethics curriculum. He was hired as a part time instructor at the Harvard Business School, and left HBO in 2013 to teach full time. McGee reflects upon his life and legacy, and shares his advice to aspiring film and television industry professionals.

Video Oral History Interview with Henry W. McGee, Section A2016_025_001_006, TRT: 6:10:24
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Henry W. McGee narrates his photographs.