

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Vera Ricketts

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Ricketts, Vera, 1922-2019
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Vera Ricketts,
Dates:	July 23, 2017
Bulk Dates:	2017
Physical Description:	4 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:01:13).
Abstract:	Pharmacist and civic leader Vera Ricketts (1922 - 2019) worked at Howard University Hospital and Duke University Hospital. She also served as president of the Inglewood Pacific Chapter of The Links, Incorporated and was a founding member of the graduate chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Ricketts was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 23, 2017, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2017_143
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Pharmacist and civic leader Vera Ricketts was born on October 20, 1922 in Indianapolis, Indiana to Sarah Chilton Phelps and Robert Phelps, Sr. There, Ricketts attended Hazel Hart Hendricks School 37 and Crispus Attucks High School where she graduated in 1941. She later went on to attend Butler University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and graduated with her B.S. degree in pharmacology in 1948. As an undergraduate student, she was an active member of the Congress of Racial Equality.

Ricketts began her career as a pharmacist at Howard University in Washington, D.C. In 1958, Ricketts became the first female African American pharmacist at Duke University Hospital in Durham, North Carolina. During this period, she also helped establish the pharmacy at Lincoln Hospital in Durham, where she trained nurse practitioners in pharmacology. Ricketts eventually returned with her husband, William Newton Ricketts, to Washington, D.C., where she worked at the District of Columbia General Hospital pharmacy. In 1960, she and her husband moved to Los Angeles, California, where she worked as an administrator at his medical practice. An active community leader, Ricketts advocated for the creation of the Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital in Los Angeles' South Central neighborhood. Ricketts went on to serve as the president of the Auxiliary to the National Medical Association from 1981 to 1982.

In addition to her professional career, Ricketts was also active in other community organizations in the Los Angeles area. In 1979, Ricketts founded the Inglewood Pacific Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, and she served as its chapter president from 1983 to 1985. Ricketts also founded the Theta Mu Omega Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Through her membership in the sorority, she volunteered on the board of the Jenesse Center, Inc., a shelter for battered women and children in Los Angeles. In 2017, Ricketts and her husband, William Newton Ricketts, received recognition for their thirty plus years of humanitarian work in Jamaica.

Ricketts and her husband have four daughters: Verlie Ricketts Lockings, Renee Ricketts, Victoria Ricketts Wilson and Wendy Ricketts Greene.

Vera Ricketts was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 23, 2017.

Ricketts passed away on October 26, 2019.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Vera Ricketts was conducted by Harriette Cole on July 23, 2017, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 4 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Pharmacist and civic leader Vera Ricketts (1922 - 2019) worked at Howard University Hospital and Duke University Hospital. She also served as president of the Inglewood Pacific Chapter of The Links, Incorporated and was a founding member of the graduate chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

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:

Ricketts, Vera, 1922-2019

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ricketts, Vera, 1922-2019 --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Pharmacist

Pharmacist

Civic Leader

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|MedicalMakers

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 Vera Ricketts, July 23, 2017. 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 Vera Ricketts, Section A2017_143_001_001, TRT: 1:28:46 ?

Vera Ricketts was born on October 20, 1922 in Indianapolis, Indiana to Sarah Chilton Phelps and Robert Phelps, Sr. Her father and his nine siblings were born and raised in Clarkesville, Tennessee. There, he met her mother, who was also from the area, and the couple married at sixteen years old. Then, they migrated to Indianapolis, where Ricketts' father found work as a laborer. Ricketts grew up in Indianapolis with her eight siblings. As a young child, she was prone to illness, and suffered from Sydenham's chorea, which caused her to miss school. She began her education at Indianapolis' Hazel Hart Hendricks School 37, where she became interested in science and nature. Then, she attended Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis before enrolling at the Indianapolis College of Pharmacy in 1944. There, she was the only African American student in her class, and was treated unfairly by her professors. Outside of class, she worked to fund her education, and was an active member of Congress of Racial Equality.

Video Oral History Interview with Vera Ricketts, Section A2017_143_001_002, TRT: 2:30:16 ?

Vera Ricketts graduated from Indianapolis College of Pharmacy in 1948, and sought employment at a hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. However, her application was later denied because of her race. She worked as a retail pharmacist for a short time before accepting a position at Howard University in Washington, D.C. There, she met medical student William Newton Ricketts, whom she married a year later. The couple then moved to Durham, North Carolina, where Ricketts' husband began his surgical internship at Lincoln Hospital. In the late 1950s, he moved to Norfolk, Virginia for further training while Ricketts remained in Durham to work at Duke University Hospital. There, she was supported by her white coworkers after a racist customer refused her service. After living apart for several years, Ricketts and her husband reunited in Washington, D.C., where she worked at District of Columbia General Hospital. She recalls joining Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and describes the segregated public spaces of the era.

Video Oral History Interview with Vera Ricketts, Section A2017_143_001_003, TRT: 3:30:20 ?

Vera Ricketts helped establish the pharmacy at Lincoln Hospital in Durham, North Carolina, where she trained nurse practitioners in pharmacology. She then worked at Duke University Hospital and District of Columbia General Hospital in Washington, D.C., where one of her responsibilities was processing saline solutions. After a brief visit to Los Angeles, California, Ricketts and her husband, William Newton Ricketts, decided to move there in 1960. She then worked as an administrator at her husband's medical practice for ten years. Ricketts also became active in the Los Angeles community, and advocated for the creation of the Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital in Los Angeles' South Central neighborhood. She founded the Theta Mu Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and co-chartered the Inglewood Pacific Chapter of The Links, Incorporated in Los Angeles. With these organizations, Ricketts donated hospital supplies in Montego Bay, Jamaica, and gifted desks and computers to schools in need.

Video Oral History Interview with Vera Ricketts, Section A2017_143_001_004, TRT: 4:31:51 ?

Vera Ricketts was elected president of the Auxiliary to the National Medical Association during the 1980s. At this point in the interview, Ricketts talks about her family, and the significance of President Barack Obama's administration.

She also shares her advice to aspiring pharmacists, and reflects upon her life, legacy and how she would like to be remembered as well as her concerns for the African American community. Ricketts begins this section by narrating her photographs.