

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Frank Clark

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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>	Clark, Frank, 1945 September 3-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Frank Clark,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 2, 2001
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2001
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:57:03).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Energy chief executive Frank Clark (1945 - ) worked his way up from the mailroom to become President of the Illinois electric company, ComEd. Clark was also appointed to the position of Senior Vice President of Exelon Energy Delivery, ComEd's parent company. Clark was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 2, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2001_014
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Business executive Frank Clark is the perfect example of an American success story. He was born on September 3, 1945, in Chicago, Illinois. He married his wife Vera at age twenty, and was hired in the mailroom of ComEd, an Illinois electric company, shortly thereafter. In 1967, Clark was drafted into the military and his career at ComEd was interrupted by a tour of duty in Vietnam. His first son, Frank M. Clark III was born later that year.

Clark would return to ComEd after his tour of duty and go on to a distinguished career with ComEd. Clark has served as Senior Vice President of Corporate and Governmental Affairs, Western Division Commercial Manager, Public Affairs Manager, and Senior Staff Attorney to both the Rate and Regulatory Affairs Departments, in addition to holding several positions in the Purchasing Department. In 2001, Clark was appointed to the position of Senior Vice President of Exelon Energy Delivery (ComEd's parent company) and President of ComEd. Clark holds degrees in law and business administration, both from Chicago's DePaul University.

He serves on the Board of Directors for the Metropolitan Family Services, Governor State University Foundation, the Illinois State Chamber of Commerce, and the Chicago Legal Clinic. He also serves on the board of the Adler Planetarium. Clark and his wife, Vera, who he met in grade school, reside in Hazel Crest, Illinois and have two sons.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Frank Clark was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on August 2, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Energy chief executive Frank Clark (1945 - ) worked his way up from the mailroom to become President of the Illinois electric company, ComEd. Clark was

also appointed to the position of Senior Vice President of Exelon Energy Delivery, ComEd's parent company.

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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:

Clark, Frank, 1945 September 3-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Clark, Frank, 1945 September 3---Interviews

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African American executives--Illinois--Chicago--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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Commonwealth Edison Company

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# Occupations:

Corporate Chief Executive

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# HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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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 Frank Clark, August 2, 2001. 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 Frank Clark, Section A2001\_014\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:39 ?

Frank Mitchell Clark, Executive Vice President for ComEd Energy Delivery, and a Senior Vice President of Exelon Corporation, describes his early childhood and family background. He speaks of his hardworking mother, Silvella Clark, and her influence on his development as one of the first African-American corporate executives in the United States. His devoted wife, Vera, recognizes his potential and at her insistence, he takes a job in the mailroom at ComEd where he will eventually move up through the ranks to be one of its top executives. Clark also discusses growing up as an African-American Catholic and how that helped him to assimilate into the corporate world, but also shielded

him from some of the uglier sides of racism.  
African American families--Illinois--Chicago.  
Childhood--Illinois--Chicago.  
Commonwealth Edison Company.  
African Americans--Religion.  
Racism.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Clark, Section A2001\_014\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:31 ?

Frank Mitchell Clark vividly describes his experiences in Vietnam, characterizing it as an, "excruciating year." He recalls encounters in combat and the painful solitude and fear he felt during his tour of duty. He also talks candidly about race relations in the military. He returns from Vietnam with a renewed sense of ambition and attends Loop Junior College [later Harold Washington College] while continuing to work in the mailroom at ComEd. At ComEd he begins to see opportunities for advancement. He gets a break from a ComEd manager and fellow war veteran who arranges for a promotion to a position in purchasing. The position is located in Stickney, Illinois where few of his fellow employees have ever worked with an African-American before. Clark goes on to discuss his perceptions of attitudes towards race at various levels at ComEd in the 1960s, from Stickney up to the executive level. As he moves up in ComEd he comes into contact with other African-American executives and encounters Tom Ayers, a sympathetic CEO who will give him many of the opportunities that eventually lead to his present executive position.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.  
Vietnam War, 1961-1975--Influence.  
African Americans--Promotions.  
African American executives--Illinois.  
Commonwealth Edison Company.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Clark, Section A2001\_014\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:08 ?

Frank Mitchell Clark, a high ranking executive at ComEd, traces his career at ComEd, his rise through the ranks and the people who helped him along the way. He describes the pride his family had in his college degree and his pursuit of a law degree with the help of his wife Vera. He discusses the the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago, its effects on the corporate system of ComEd, and the changing face of the workforce that he, himself was active in leading. Clark also goes into his days of lobbying in Springfield, Illinois for ComEd, maneuvering through a landscape of mostly white politicians. He briefly discusses his involvement in the passing of the "restructuring law," which restructured electricity rates in Illinois. He then reflects with pride on his career and accomplishments at ComEd, and his efforts to mentor others in the company.

African Americans--Education.  
Civil rights movements--Illinois--Chicago.  
Diversity in the workplace.  
African Americans--Mentoring--Illinois--Chicago.  
Electric utilities-Laws and legislation.  
Commonwealth Edison Company.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Clark, Section A2001\_014\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

ComEd executive Frank Mitchell Clark discusses the current prospects for African Americans to advance in the corporate world. Although there are difficulties, he is has optimism in the possibilities for people who want to work

hard. He still sees room for improvement in the numbers of African Americans and other minorities in executive positions. He also admits that there are family and personal sacrifices to be made in his level of accomplishment. When asked about his hopes and concerns for the future, he expresses sadness at the state of black America, citing less opportunities, the large percentage of black men in prison, drugs and the breakdown of the family. Recalling his own dramatic rise to the top of his field, he does retain optimism for the future. Clark then reflects on his legacy and sees it as twofold, personal and professional. He has pride in the sacrifices he has made, and that they made success for other African Americans possible. And lastly, he looks forward to spending time with his four grandchildren. Clark then describes a number of photos that depict his life, family, and career.

Diversity in the workplace.

Photographs.

African American families.

African American executives.

African Americans--Social conditions.