

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Lloyd C. Elam

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Elam, Lloyd C.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Lloyd C. Elam,
Dates:	March 14, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:22:56).
Abstract:	College president, psychiatrist, and psychiatry professor Dr. Lloyd C. Elam (1928 - 2008) founded Meharry Medical College's Psychiatry Department, and served as the college's president until 1981. Elam was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 14, 2007, in Nashville, Tennessee. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_089
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Founder of Meharry Medical College's Psychiatry Department and retired college president Dr. Lloyd C. Elam was born on October 27, 1928 in Little Rock, Arkansas. His parents, Ruth Davis Elam and Harry Penoy Elam met in church in Little Rock. Elam attended Stephens School and graduated from Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in 1944 at age fifteen. He went to junior college in Little Rock before moving to Harvey, Illinois. There, Elam worked for the Maremont Automobile Plant and commuted to Chicago to attend classes at Roosevelt University where he graduated with his B.S. degree in zoology in 1950. After a stint in the United States Army, Elam earned his M.D. degree from the University of Washington School of Medicine in 1957. From 1957 to 1958, Elam completed an internship at the University of Illinois Hospital in Chicago, and from 1958 to 1961, he served as a resident in psychiatry at the University of Chicago Hospital.

Elam joined Chicago's Billings Hospital as staff psychiatrist and instructor of psychiatry in 1961. From 1961 to 1963, he served as assistant professor and chairman of the Psychiatry Department of Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. Becoming a full professor in 1963, Elam was appointed interim dean of the college in 1966. In 1968, he was selected president of Meharry Medical College and supervised the school's growth in that capacity until 1981. From 1981 to 1982, Elam was college chancellor. He served as Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry from 1982 to 1995 when he retired to serve as a volunteer faculty member. Elam served as a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, California in 1982. He was made Professor Emeritus of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences in 1996 and Chairman Emeritus in 1997. Elam is a member of the Tennessee Psychiatric Association, Tennessee Medical Association, American Medical Association, National Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association, American College of Psychiatrists, Black Psychiatrists of America, R.F. Boyd Medical Society and the American College of Forensic Examiners.

In 1973, Elam was presented an honorary Doctor of Laws from Harvard University. His other awards include honorary degrees from Meharry Medical College and St. Lawrence University; the 1988 National Board of

Medical Examiners Distinguished Service Award; induction into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society; the 1972 Nashville Club Man of the Year Award; the 1976 Human Relations Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the 1988 Eleanor Roosevelt Key, Roosevelt University's highest alumni award. Meharry Medical College established the Lloyd C. Elam Mental Health Center in his honor and that building now bares his name.

Elam and his wife, Clara Elam, R.N., have two daughters: Dr. Gloria Elam-Norris of Chicago and Dr. Laurie Elam-Evans of Atlanta. Elam passed away on October 4, 2008.

Elam was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 14, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Lloyd C. Elam was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 14, 2007, in Nashville, Tennessee, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. College president, psychiatrist, and psychiatry professor Dr. Lloyd C. Elam (1928 - 2008) founded Meharry Medical College's Psychiatry Department, and served as the college's president until 1981.

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:

Elam, Lloyd C.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Elam, Lloyd C.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Meharry Medical College

Occupations:

Psychiatrist

Psychiatry Professor

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Dr. Lloyd C. Elam, March 14, 2007. 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 Dr. Lloyd C. Elam, Section A2007_089_001_001, TRT: 0:30:58
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Dr. Lloyd C. Elam was born on October 27, 1928 in Little Rock, Arkansas to Ruth Davis Elam and Harry Elam. His maternal ancestors were Nigerian, and eventually settled in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. Elam's paternal great-grandfather was a white judge in Louisiana. He financially supported Elam's paternal grandfather, who worked as a scribe in the state capitol and held records as a stagecoach racer. Elam's father received a tenth grade education in Marshall, Texas, before moving to Chicago, Illinois, where he married his first wife. After she contracted tuberculosis, the couple moved to Little Rock. He became a widower shortly afterwards; and remarried Elam's mother, with whom he raised six children, including Elam. His parents attempted to enroll him in a Catholic kindergarten, but Elam resented his white teacher, who sat segregated from the African American students during field trips. Instead, he accompanied his father to work at a lumberyard.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Lloyd C. Elam, Section A2007_089_001_002, TRT: 0:29:00
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Dr. Lloyd C. Elam grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas. He was fond of his family's livestock, and refused to eat meat until the age of twelve years old. He attended Stephens Elementary School, where Principal Leroy Christophe organized film screenings as an alternative to Little Rock's segregated movie theatres. Elam went on to attend Paul Laurence Dunbar High School. He walked two miles to school each day, as the community organized bus transportation only for students who commuted over five miles. Elam was a strong student, and spent his free time in the library. He was influenced by his teacher, Alexander Cann, not to pursue a farming career; and first became interested in psychology at thirteen years old, when he read a book on the correlation between physique and personality. Although psychiatric illnesses were commonly misunderstood at the time, Elam learned about mental health from his mother, who volunteered at the segregated state hospital.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Lloyd C. Elam, Section A2007_089_001_003, TRT: 0:29:27
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Dr. Lloyd C. Elam aspired to study medicine from the age of sixteen years old. He graduated from Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in 1944; and, one year later, enrolled at Roosevelt University in Chicago, Illinois. He lived with family members until obtaining an apartment and a position at an automotive plant in Harvey, Illinois. He commuted to Chicago to attend class, and earned a degree in 1950. At that time, Elam enlisted in the U.S. Army. He joined the Medical Service Corps, and worked at the Madigan Hospital in Tacoma, Washington. Elam went on to attend the University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle, where he was the sole African American student. He conducted research on the correlation between stress and disease under Thomas Holmes; and met his wife, who was a nursing student. Upon graduating in 1957, Elam returned to Chicago, where he completed a medical internship, and then enrolled in the psychiatry program at the University of Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Lloyd C. Elam, Section A2007_089_001_004, TRT: 0:29:26
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Dr. Lloyd C. Elam completed his psychiatric training at the University of Chicago in 1961, and then joined the faculty of Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. He founded the school's Department of Psychiatry, and organized a day hospital in Nashville. Although African Americans were often wary of psychiatric care, the day hospital succeeded in building a strong relationship with the community. In 1968, Elam was named to the presidency of Meharry Medical College. During his tenure, the school expanded its campus and established Ph.D. degree and research programs. Following school desegregation, Elam advocated for the importance of historically black colleges. He focused on serving the black community, and encouraged Nashville's African American children to pursue careers in medicine. Elam served as president until 1981, and retired from the college in 1997. He was a member of several corporate boards until the age of seventy-two years old, after which he focused on volunteer work.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Lloyd C. Elam, Section A2007_089_001_005, TRT: 0:24:05
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Dr. Lloyd C. Elam remained civically active in Nashville, Tennessee after his retirement from Meharry Medical College. He taught Sunday school at Nashville's First Baptist Church for forty-five years, and was an active member of 100 Black Men of America, Inc. He talks about the impact of the Civil Rights Movement on activists' mental health, and the positive effects of working on behalf of the community. Elam reflects upon his life and legacy, as well as his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.