

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Alfred Richard Fornay

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Fornay, Alfred
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Richard Fornay,
Dates:	July 19, 2007 and July 23, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	11 Betacame SP videocassettes (5:17:58).
Abstract:	Magazine beauty editor Alfred Richard Fornay (1941 -) was Ebony Man's first editor-in-chief and author of the book, "Fornay's Guide to Skin Care and Makeup for Women of Color." Fornay was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 19, 2007 and July 23, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_211
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Magazine beauty editor and consultant Alfred Fornay was born on June 8, 1941 in Cincinnati, Ohio. After graduating from high school, Fornay moved to New York City, where he attended the Wilfred Academy of Beauty and Hair Design. In 1966, Fornay went on to earn his A.A.S. degree from the City College of New York in merchandising and marketing, and another A.A.S. degree from the State University of New York's Fashion Institute of Technology.

In 1971, after completing his education, Fornay was hired as the Assistant Ethnic Marketing Manager for Clairol Cosmetics. The next year, he moved to *Essence* magazine, where he was the Associate Beauty Editor. In 1973, he returned to cosmetics as Beauty/Training Director for Fashion Fair. Five years later, he was hired by Revlon and became Creative Director for Revlon's "Polished Ambers" Collection.

In 1980, Fornay became an editor for *Elan* magazine's beauty section. Two years later, he was hired as *Ebony*'s beauty and fashion editor. When *Ebony* expanded with a new magazine, *Ebony Man*, in 1985, Fornay served as the magazine's first editor in chief, and worked with the publication in various capacities thereafter. He also wrote contributing pieces for other magazines and in 1989 wrote and published *Fornay's Guide to Skin Care and Makeup for Women of Color*.

Fornay has been affiliated with a number of organizations, including the National Association of Black Journalists, the Boys and Girls Choirs of Harlem and the nonprofit styleWORKS. Beginning in 2000, he has taught evening classes on color, cosmetics and men's grooming at the New Rochelle High School. He published two additional books, *The African American Woman's Guide to Successful Make-Up and Skin Care* and *Born Beautiful: The African American Teenager's Complete Beauty Guide*. From 2005 to 2006, he served as a special assistant to David Paterson, then a New York state senator. Fornay is developing a new magazine, *Luxe Living* and another book, *Beauty for Life*, for older women. Fornay opened the Image Connection Institute, a personal development

company, purveyors of business protocol, etiquette, manners, courtesy, fashion, beauty, grooming programs for men, women, young people and children. His first clients were professional interns for the Bill Clinton Foundation.

Fornay was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 19, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Alfred Richard Fornay was conducted by Adrienne Jones on July 19, 2007 and July 23, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 11 Betacame SP videocassettes. Magazine beauty editor Alfred Richard Fornay (1941 -) was *Ebony Man's* first editor-in-chief and author of the book, "Fornay's Guide to Skin Care and Makeup for Women of Color."

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:

Fornay, Alfred

Jones, Adrienne (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Fornay, Alfred--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Magazine Beauty Editor

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Alfred Richard Fornay, July 19, 2007 and July 23, 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 Alfred Richard Fornay, Section A2007_211_001_001, TRT: 0:29:56 ?

Alfred Richard Fornay was born on June 8, 1941 in Cincinnati, Ohio to

Marguerite Weatherford Fornay and Alfred Fornay. His paternal grandfather, woodworker Harvey Fornay, was from North Carolina, and crafted cedar chests. His maternal family came from Meridian, Mississippi, where racial violence led his maternal grandmother, Erma Pitchford Weatherford, to abandon her property and move to Chicago, Illinois. She worked as a domestic in the Hyde Park neighborhood; and later settled with Fornay's maternal grandfather, Henry Weatherford, in Cincinnati's integrated Avondale neighborhood. There, they raised Fornay's mother in the Catholic church, although she converted to Seventh-day Adventism after meeting and marrying Fornay's father at nineteen years old. Fornay's mother worked as a maid, and later as an aide at a nursing home; while his father found contract work in masonry and plumbing, after being denied entry to the plumbers union because of his race. Fornay also describes his mother's fashion sense.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Richard Fornay, Section A2007_211_001_002, TRT: 0:29:23 ?

Alfred Richard Fornay's maternal grandmother, Erma Pitchford Weatherford, had Cherokee ancestry. After leaving the South, she moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where she met and married Fornay's maternal grandfather, Henry Weatherford, a truck driver and landscaper from Georgia. Fornay's paternal grandfather, Harvey Fornay, was descended from slaves; while his paternal grandmother, Mattie Fornay, was white. Together, they raised nine children, including Fornay's father, on a farm in Union Mills, North Carolina. His father completed a few years of school before leaving to join the workforce. He later moved to Cincinnati, where he worked as a chauffeur for the city's business executives. Through these connections, he obtained contractual work in carpentry, landscaping and masonry. After meeting Fornay's mother at Cincinnati's Cotton Club, he obtained a position at the Cincinnati Milling Machine Company warehouse. There, he became a supervisor; but, because of his race, was never promoted to the position of foreman.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Richard Fornay, Section A2007_211_001_003, TRT: 0:30:47 ?

Alfred Richard Fornay grew up in the integrated, middle class neighborhood of Madisonville in Cincinnati, Ohio. Alongside his sisters, Beverly Fornay English and Elizabeth Fornay Wilburn, he was raised in the Seventh-day Adventist church by his mother, Marguerite Weatherford Fornay, and was active in the church's Pathfinders club. Growing up, he watched television programs like 'The Howdy Doody Show' and 'The Loretta Young Show,' and was disturbed by the discriminatory portrayal of African Americans in the media. He attended the public, integrated Avondale School, where he was encouraged by his teacher, Miss Foote. Fornay's mother was active in his education, and motivated him to excel. On one occasion, Fornay was assigned to share the role of the donkey in the school play with a white student. The white student's mother arranged to have her son to play the donkey's front half, but Fornay's mother approached the play's director and successfully advocated for Fornay to stand in the front.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Richard Fornay, Section A2007_211_001_004, TRT: 0:30:29 ?

Alfred Richard Fornay transferred from the integrated Avondale School to the all-black Seventh-day Adventist Shiloh Preparatory School in Cincinnati, Ohio. There, he was inspired by the school's highly educated black teachers, and admired the principal, Pearlie Phillips. He was interested in news media, and also enjoyed painting and crafts. Fornay remained at the Shiloh Preparatory

School until the eighth grade, when he was sent to the all-black Pine Forge Institute, a Seventh-day Adventist boarding school in Pine Forge, Pennsylvania, where his tuition was paid by his mother without his father's help. In Pine Forge, Fornay was exposed to black students from across the country, as well as from Africa and the Caribbean. He was influenced by science teacher Clarence Nembhard, as well as Esther N. Gill, who taught typing and shorthand. He paid for his books by working in the school's orchard and ironing other student's shirts. Fornay also talks about the tenets of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Richard Fornay, Section A2007_211_001_005, TRT: 0:30:47 ?

Alfred Richard Fornay's mother, Marguerite Weatherford Fornay, struggled to pay for him and his sisters to attend the Pine Forge Institute, so he returned home to Cincinnati, Ohio after his junior year. He enrolled at the public Hughes High School, and found work as a dishwasher at the all-white Losantiville Country Club. Upon graduating in 1960, Fornay moved to New York City to pursue a career in fashion and beauty. In 1966, he was accepted into the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge program at the City University of New York. While there, he was encouraged by his English professor and Pastor Robert Carter of the Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist Church to apply to the business program at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). Fornay enrolled at FIT in 1969, and became the first black vice president of the student council, while also attending night classes at the Wilfred Academy of Hair and Beauty Culture. In addition, Fornay remembers the Ebony Fashion Fair.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Richard Fornay, Section A2007_211_001_006, TRT: 0:30:15 ?

Alfred Richard Fornay attended the Ophelia DeVore School of Self-Development and Modeling, where he learned to present products professionally. He earned a beauty license from Wilfred Academy of Hair and Beauty Culture in 1969, and interned at Rose Morgan's House of Beauty. While a student at the Fashion Institute of Technology, he wrote to Essence editor Susan Taylor, who invited Fornay to do the makeup for the magazine's next cover. After that project, he was recruited to help launch Libra Cosmetics' black makeup line, which was featured in Women's Wear Daily. Upon graduating in 1971, Fornay was hired as the ethnic marketing manager for Clairol, Inc., and trained at the Clairol Institute of Hair Coloring. He also did the makeup for models Barbara Summers and Jolie Jones, who were featured in a spread for The New York Times that attracted the attention of Essence CEO Edward Lewis. He recruited Fornay as an associate beauty editor in 1972. Fornay also describes his stylistic influences.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Richard Fornay, Section A2007_211_001_007, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Alfred Richard Fornay helped magazine editor Susan Taylor design the college issue of Essence. To promote the issue, they hosted a historically black college tour, where they held tutorials and makeovers that were featured in the magazine. In 1974, Fornay was recruited by Ebony magazine owner John H. Johnson to launch the Fashion Fair cosmetics line. He became a beauty director at the Johnson Publishing Company, where he oversaw four beauty and fashion covers each year, and was mentored by editor-in-chief Lerone Benett. During this time, Fornay encouraged Johnson to feature darker skinned models like Von Gretchen Shepard on Ebony's cover. After five years, Fornay became a creative director at Revlon, Inc., where he collaborated with Captain William "Bill" Pinkney and Reverend Dr. Gregory Smith to market the Polished Ambers

cosmetics collection, which featured model Iman as the spokesperson. Fornay also talks about Johnson Products, and the impact of the Civil Rights Movement on the beauty industry.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Richard Fornay, Section A2007_211_002_008, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Alfred Richard Fornay was influenced from an early age by the styles in Tan and Ebony magazines. From 1972, he worked as an associate beauty editor at Essence magazine under editor Susan Taylor and editor-in-chief Marcia Ann Gillespie. During this time, Fornay also wrote fashion articles for Businessweek and Big Beautiful Women magazines. He then became a creative director at Revlon, Inc., where he defended model Iman from discriminatory remarks about her appearance. From 1980 to 1981, Fornay served as a beauty editor at Elan magazine under Marie Brown, who later became the agent for the release of his first book, 'Fornay's Guide to Skin Care and Makeup for Women of Color.' Published by Doubleday and Company Inc. in 1989, the book was a beauty manual for African American women, and featured model Tracey Ross on its cover. Fornay talks about the history of the beauty and entertainment industries' representations of black women, as well as beauty stereotypes and the early black cosmetic lines.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Richard Fornay, Section A2007_211_002_009, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

Alfred Richard Fornay became the beauty editor of Ebony and Jet magazines in 1982. He created a column in Ebony that highlighted men's fashion and health, and its popularity led John H. Johnson and Linda Rice Johnson to develop a new publication, Ebony Man magazine, which launched in 1985 with Fornay as the director. After three years, he left to consult for the Procter and Gamble Company and Carson, Inc. Fornay published his first book, 'Fornay's Guide to Skin Care and Makeup for Women of Color,' in 1989; and his second book, 'African American Woman's Guide to Successful Make-up and Skin Care,' in 1998. He began working with the teenaged market as a grooming consultant for the Boys Choir of Harlem, and released 'Born Beautiful: The African American Teenager's Complete Beauty Guide' in 2002. Fornay also talks about his celebrity clients, like Nancy Wilson and Aretha Franklin; and his mentorship of makeup artists like Roxanna Floyd, Ellie Winslow and Larry Cherry.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Richard Fornay, Section A2007_211_002_010, TRT: 0:28:45 ?

Alfred Richard Fornay collaborated with Chris Rock's wife, Malaak Compton Rock, at her nonprofit organization, StyleWorks. As a volunteer stylist, he conducted full makeovers for women on public assistance who were preparing for job interviews. Fornay talks about racial discrimination in the fashion industry, and the bias against dark skin colors within the black community. He also reflects upon his life; the importance of depicting African American glamour; and the future of his publications, including Luxe Living magazine.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Richard Fornay, Section A2007_211_002_011, TRT: 0:17:51 ?

Alfred Richard Fornay narrates his photographs.