

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Huel D. Perkins

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Perkins, Huel D. (Huel Davis), 1924-2013
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Huel D. Perkins,
Dates:	March 26, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:31:00).
Abstract:	Academic administrator and music professor Huel D. Perkins (1924 - 2013) was an instructor at Lincoln University and Southern University, where he also served as dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. At Louisiana State University, he served as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. In 2002, Perkins founded Huel D. Perkins & Associates, Inc. Perkins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 26, 2008, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_063
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Retired educator Huel Davis Perkins was born on December 27, 1924 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Between 1943 and 1946, Perkins served in the U.S. Navy as a musician first class. He graduated from Southern University with highest honors in 1947. From 1948 to 1950, Perkins worked as a music instructor at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. Perkins then served as an associate professor of music at Southern University from 1951 through 1960. During this time, Perkins also completed his M.A. degree in music from Northwestern University in 1951 and his Ph.D. from Northwestern University in 1958. From 1968 to 1978, Perkins served as the Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities at Southern University. In addition, Perkins was appointed as the deputy director of education programming at the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, D.C. in 1978. Perkins then commenced a long tenure at Louisiana State University where he served as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs from 1979 through 1990 and as Executive Assistant to the Chancellor and Special Assistant to the Chancellor from 1990 through 1998. In 1996, President Bill Clinton appointed Perkins to the Board of Advisors of the J.W. Fulbright foreign scholarship program. He served in this capacity until 2002. Perkins then founded Huel D. Perkins & Associates, Inc., a consulting firm and speakers bureau. He serves as its president. Perkins has also served as Chairman on the Education Foundation of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and has served as Grand Sire Archon of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. In 2005, Louisiana State University acknowledged Perkins' years of service by awarding him the honorary Doctor of Humane Letters and naming a doctoral fellowship program after him.

Perkins has also been honored by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (Humanist of the Year); the National Conference of Christians and Jews (Brotherhood Award); the LSU Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa (Outstanding educator); the Baton Rouge Human Relations Council (Brotherhood Award); the Istrouma Area Council of Boy Scouts of America (Citizen of the Year); the Louisiana Chapter of NAACP (A. P. Turead Award);

the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity (Award of Merit) and received the Centennial Award given by Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. He has served as a member of the President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Perkins has critiqued and published numerous books and articles on the African American experience in America. He has served on several dozen boards dealing with social and educational issues including the Baton Rouge Symphony, Louisiana Public Broadcasting, Corp., and the New Orleans Museum of Art. Perkins is the recipient of many public service awards for his achievements both in the civic and academic communities.

Perkins is married to Thelma O. Smith. 2008 marks the couple's sixtieth wedding anniversary. They have one child, Huel Alfred Perkins.

Perkins was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 26, 2008.

Dr. Huel Perkins passed away on April 15, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Huel D. Perkins was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 26, 2008, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and music professor Huel D. Perkins (1924 - 2013) was an instructor at Lincoln University and Southern University, where he also served as dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. At Louisiana State University, he served as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. In 2002, Perkins founded Huel D. Perkins & Associates, Inc.

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:

Perkins, Huel D. (Huel Davis), 1924-2013

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Perkins, Huel D. (Huel Davis), 1924-2013 --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Academic Administrator

Music Professor

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Huel D. Perkins, March 26, 2008. 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 Huel D. Perkins, Section A2008_063_001_001, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Huel D. Perkins was born on December 27, 1924 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana to Velma Davis Perkins and John Perkins, Sr. His maternal great-grandmother, Mary Jane Davis, was born to an enslaved woman and her white slaveholder, and his maternal great-grandfather worked for the Standard Oil Company at the Baton Rouge Refinery. Perkins' mother, a graduate of McKinley Senior High School in Baton Rouge, studied for two years at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, and then earned a teaching degree at Southern University in Baton Rouge. Perkins' father was born in McComb, Mississippi, and had three siblings. He attended Utica Junior College in Raymond, Mississippi and Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College in Lorman, Mississippi. There, he lost his right arm in a machinery accident at work. He then moved to Baton Rouge, where he met Perkins' mother at her mother's boarding house. Rejected from law school, he nevertheless passed the Mississippi bar examination, and practiced in Mississippi and Baton Rouge.

Video Oral History Interview with Huel D. Perkins, Section A2008_063_001_002, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Huel D. Perkins grew up in a racially mixed neighborhood in central Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He belonged to a segregated Boy Scout troop, and had a close-knit group of friends. Throughout his childhood, Perkins attended Bethel A.M.E. Church with his family. At his maternal grandmother's insistence, he also joined Mount Zion First Baptist Church, where he was influenced by Reverend Gardner Taylor. Perkins' mother taught home economics at Southern University in Baton Rouge, and he attended the first through twelfth grades at the semi-private Southern University Laboratory School, where he began his music education. Upon graduating in 1940, he matriculated at Southern University. He was drafted into the U.S. Navy in 1943, and joined the navy band at Great Lakes Naval Station in Lake County, Illinois, where he played with saxophonist Willie Smith and trumpeter Clark Terry. When his service ended, he returned to Southern University, where he was elected chapter president of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

Video Oral History Interview with Huel D. Perkins, Section A2008_063_001_003, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Huel D. Perkins attended Southern University Laboratory School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where teachers like Lesley Solete Banks helped him develop an appreciation for the English language. After his U.S. Navy service, Perkins returned to Southern University, and earned a bachelor's degree in music education in 1947. That year, he also met his wife, Thelma Smith Perkins, who was in the same department. Perkins taught briefly at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio and Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, and then began his graduate studies at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Upon graduation, he was hired to teach interdisciplinary courses in music and the humanities at Southern University. He eventually transitioned to administration, serving as dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. During this time, the Louisiana Department of Education pressured Felton Grandison

Clark, Perkins' mentor and the university president, to expel Southern University students who took part in sit-ins.

Video Oral History Interview with Huel D. Perkins, Section A2008_063_001_004, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Huel D. Perkins taught courses in music and the humanities at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and was appointed by President Felton Grandison Clark to direct the music department. Perkins then served as dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, before joining the chancellor's office at Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge. However, Perkins delayed his start at LSU for one year in order to serve as the deputy director of the National Endowment for the Humanities, where he allocated funding for humanities projects at historically black colleges. Upon returning to LSU, Perkins served in an administrative capacity for twenty-three years. He also conducted research on the Harlem Renaissance at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, and published a chapter on land-grant colleges, 'Widening the Base of the Triangle,' in 1992. Perkins reflects upon the importance of the humanities, as well as his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Huel D. Perkins, Section A2008_063_001_005, TRT: 0:31:30 ?

Huel D. Perkins was a professor of the humanities at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. His courses explored the works of musicians, artists and writers, including 'Cyrano de Bergerac' by Edmond Rostand and 'The Fountainhead' by Ayn Rand. He also inspired his students' interest in the opera. On occasion, he traveled with his former student, Lonell Wright, to New York City, where they saw performances at the Metropolitan Opera House. In addition to his career in academia, Perkins was active in the Rotary Club of Baton Rouge, and was the first African American chairman of the Capital Area United Way. Perkins reflects upon his health, legacy and how he would like to be remembered. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.