

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable William E. Ward

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Ward, William E. (William Edward), 1933-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William E. Ward,
Dates:	May 12, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:34:14).
Abstract:	History professor, political organizer, and mayor The Honorable William E. Ward (1933 - 2018) was a professor and the chair of the history department at Norfolk State University. Ward was appointed as the first African American and longest serving mayor of Chesapeake, Virginia in 1990. Ward was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 12, 2010, in Norfolk, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_014
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

History professor, political organizer, and mayor The Honorable William E. Ward was born on December 1, 1933 in Virginia to Annie Ward. Ward earned his B.A. degree in history in 1957 and his M.A. degree in history in 1960 from Virginia State University. He also earned both his M.A. and Ph.D degrees in American and African history in 1972 and 1977, respectively, from Clark University.

In 1963, Ward moved to Chesapeake where he began his public life as a grass-roots political organizer, helping to bring sewer and roads to poorer neighborhoods in Chesapeake and Norfolk. Between 1973 and 2000, he worked as a professor at Norfolk State University where he served as a professor and the chair of the history department. He was also the president of the Faculty Senate at Norfolk State University between 1975 and 1977 and chaired the Black History Month committee for the Faculty Senate of Virginia Benefits and Senate Grievance committees. In addition, Ward was a member of the college-wide Council of Teacher Education. In 1978, Ward ran for the Chesapeake City Council and was declared a winner forty-eight hours after having been declared a loser, when 123 uncounted votes were located. He was elected Vice Mayor under Mayor David I. Wynne between 1984 and 1986, and also in 1988 and 1990. Ward was then appointed as the city's first black mayor in 1990 after Wynne faced allegations of fraud. Ward ran for re-election in 1992 and won and in 1996, Ward ran for re-election and defeated Republican challenger John Cosgrove, earning fifty-five percent of the vote and serving until 2004. Ward was Chesapeake's longest serving mayor.

Ward was appointed to the Board of Visitors at Virginia State University in 2003 by Governor Mark Warner and in 2008 became a board member of the university. In addition, he served as the Executive Director of the Hampton Roads Partnership, Hampton Roads Economic Development Alliance, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, and Southeastern Public Service Authority. Additional past professional affiliations include the

Virginia Society for History Teachers, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, the Southern Historical Association, the American Historical Association and the Virginia Social Sciences Association. Ward also served as the chairman of the Chesapeake Hurricane Katrina Relief Task Force.

Ward lived in Virginia and was married to Rose M. Ward. He was also the father of son, Michael, and daughter, Michelle.

Ward passed away on July 10, 2018.

William Ward was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 12, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable William E. Ward was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 12, 2010, in Norfolk, Virginia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. History professor, political organizer, and mayor The Honorable William E. Ward (1933 - 2018) was a professor and the chair of the history department at Norfolk State University. Ward was appointed as the first African American and longest serving mayor of Chesapeake, Virginia in 1990.

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:

Ward, William E. (William Edward), 1933-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Ward, William E. (William Edward), 1933- --Interviews

African American politicians--Virginia--Interviews.

African American mayors--Virginia--Chesapeake--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Political Organizer

Mayor

HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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 The Honorable William E. Ward, May 12, 2010. 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 The Honorable William E. Ward, Section A2010_014_001_001, TRT: 0:28:36 ?

The Honorable William E. Ward was born on December 1, 1933 in Lunenburg County, Virginia to Annie Ward. Having been born out of wedlock, Ward knew nothing about his biological father. His mother worked as a domestic and laborer on the Pettus Dairy Farm, and Ward was raised in the home of the Pettus family with his brother, Bernard Ward, in Keysville, Virginia. Growing up, Ward's education and health were overseen by the Pettus family who had no children of their own. Ward attended the Bluestone Harmony Academic and Industrial School in Keysville. Outside of school, he worked for the dairy farm delivering milk and as a clerk at the Pettus family's general store in town. At eight years old, Ward lost his right eye when he fell in a corn field while playing with his cousins. Ward talks about his heroes at the time such as actor Roy Rogers, Olympian Jesse Owens and boxer Joe Louis. He and his friends would often sneak over to the nearby car dealership to listen to Louis' fights on the car radio.

African American mothers--Virginia--Keysville.

Childhood--Virginia--Keysville.

Education, Primary--Virginia--Keysville.

Segregation in education--Virginia.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William E. Ward, Section A2010_014_001_002, TRT: 0:29:53 ?

The Honorable William E. Ward grew up in Keysville, Virginia, and attended a small public school in Lunenburg County, Virginia for only a few months before deciding to leave. He then enrolled at the all-black Bluestone Harmony Academic and Industrial School. Although it was a boarding school, Ward continued to live in the home of the Pettus family with his mother and brother, Bernard Ward. In the eighth grade, Ward transferred to Central High School in Charlotte Court House, Virginia. There, Ward excelled in his history and geography classes. Following his graduation in 1953, Ward majored in history at Virginia State College in Petersburg, Virginia under professors James Brewer and James Hugo Johnston, Jr. While there, Ward also ran long distance for the school's track team. Ward recalls the different speakers and artists who visited the campus such as lawyer Archibald Carey, Jr. and Duke Ellington. He also talks about the history of the City of Petersburg, and its importance during the American Civil War.

Boarding schools--Virginia--Keysville.

Education, Secondary--Virginia--Charlotte Court House.

Virginia State College.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William E. Ward, Section A2010_014_001_003, TRT: 0:29:04 ?

The Honorable William E. Ward graduated from Virginia State College in Petersburg, Virginia in 1957. He then worked briefly as a shipping clerk at B. Altman and Company in New York City before returning to Virginia State College to pursue a master's degree. Ward then taught history at I.C. Norcom High School in Portsmouth, Virginia, and Charles Hamilton Houston Junior High School in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1963, Ward moved to Norfolk, Virginia, where he taught history at Rosemont Junior High School before accepting a position as an assistant professor of history at Norfolk State University in 1968. While there, Ward became president of the Chesapeake Men for Progress, an all-black organization in Chesapeake, Virginia. In this role, he served as the campaign manager for two minority Chesapeake City Council candidates, Hugo A. Owens, Sr. and W.P. Clarke, Sr. During this time, Ward also studied abroad at the University of Ghana in Accra, Ghana, and the University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica.

B. Altman & Co.

Virginia State College.

Norfolk State University.

Chesapeake Men for Progress.

Chesapeake City Council.

Foreign Study.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William E. Ward, Section A2010_014_001_004, TRT: 0:29:43 ?

The Honorable William E. Ward ran as a write in candidate for a seat in the U.S. Congress in 1972. After losing the election, Ward returned to Worcester, Massachusetts to complete his graduate studies at Clark University. After graduating in 1973, he returned to his home in Chesapeake, Virginia, where he continued to teach at Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia. In 1976, Ward served as a delegate for President Jimmy Carter at the Democratic National Convention in New York City. Then in 1978, Ward was elected to the Chesapeake City Council, where he served three consecutive terms. Ward was elected vice mayor of the City of Chesapeake in 1984, and succeeded as mayor in 1990 when Mayor David I. Wynne was forced to resign. As mayor, Ward brought several international companies to Chesapeake, and obtained federal funding to redevelop the city's older black neighborhoods. Ward also talks about several cases of police brutality during his time as mayor.

Clark University.

Norfolk State University.

Chesapeake City Council.

Mayors--Virginia--Chesapeake.

Community development, Urban--Virginia--Chesapeake.

Police brutality--Virginia.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William E. Ward, Section A2010_014_001_005, TRT: 0:22:30 ?

The Honorable William E. Ward met his wife, Rose Ward, at Virginia State College in Petersburg, Virginia. They married in 1960 and had two children, Michael Ward and Michelle Ward Woodhouse. Ward served as mayor of Chesapeake, Virginia from 1990 to 2004, making him the city's longest serving mayor at that time. During his tenure, the murder trial of sniper Lee Boyd Malvo was brought to Chesapeake, and Ward came into conflict with Congressman Tom DeLay over the destruction of campaign signage. Ward also taught history

at Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia until retiring in 2000. After leaving office in 2004, Ward continued to serve on the boards of local organizations such as the New Chesapeake Men for Progress Educational Foundation Inc. and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southeast Virginia. Ward reflects upon his life and tenure as mayor of Chesapeake, and describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He also describes how he would like to be remembered.

Mayors--Virginia--Chesapeake.

Norfolk State University.

New Chesapeake Men for Progress Educational Foundation Inc.

Boys and Girls Clubs of Southeast Virginia.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William E. Ward, Section A2010_014_001_006,
TRT: 0:14:28 ?

The Honorable William E. Ward narrates his photographs.
Photographs.