

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jennie Patrick

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Patrick, Jennie R., 1949-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jennie Patrick,
Dates:	December 14, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:03:52).
Abstract:	Chemical engineer Jennie Patrick (1949 -) became the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in chemical engineering when she completed graduate studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1979. Patrick was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 14, 2012, in Metro Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_210
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Chemical engineer Jennie R. Patrick was born in Gadsden, Alabama on January 1, 1949. Her parents had only achieved schooling up to the sixth grade, with James working as a janitor and Elizabeth working as a maid. They encouraged Jennie and her four siblings to excel in their studies as a way to escape poverty. In 1964 Patrick attended Gadsden High School, a previously all white high school that was forced to integrate due to the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision. She graduated with honors in 1967 and then attended Tuskegee Institute until 1970, when the chemical engineering program was eliminated. Patrick transferred to the University of California at Berkeley, and received her B.S. degree in 1973. She went on to earn her Ph.D. degree in chemical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1979.

Upon graduation, Patrick was hired in various positions in the chemical research and development industry, including General Electric, the Philip Morris Research Facility and the Rohm and Hass Company in Bristol. She was at Rohm and Haas for five years until 1990, when she became the assistant to the executive vice president at Southern Company Services in Birmingham, Alabama. Patrick also served as an adjunct professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute from 1980 to 1983, and at Georgia Institute of Technology from 1983 to 1987. Patrick returned to Tuskegee University in 1993 as the 3M Eminent Scholar and Professor of Chemical Engineering. In addition to her teaching duties, Patrick is developing research projects in material sciences, is actively involved in leadership roles at Tuskegee, and remains firmly committed to helping minority students find success, particularly in the fields of science and engineering. Patrick later worked as a senior consultant with Raytheon Engineers and Constructors in Birmingham and, in 2000, she founded Education & Environmental Solutions.

Patrick has received recognition from professional and academic organization, including the American Association of University Women Post-doctoral Fellowship, the National Fellowship Foundation Scholarship, the Outstanding Women in Science and Engineering Award. In 1983, she was featured in the “Exceptional Black Scientist” poster series by CIBA-GEIGY Corp.

Patrick works and lives in Metro Atlanta, Georgia with her husband, Dr. Benjamin Glover.

Jennie R. Patrick was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 14, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jennie Patrick was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 14, 2012, in Metro Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Chemical engineer Jennie Patrick (1949 -) became the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in chemical engineering when she completed graduate studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1979.

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:

Patrick, Jennie R., 1949-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Patrick, Jennie R., 1949- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Chemical Engineer

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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 Jennie Patrick, December 14, 2012. 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 Jennie Patrick, Section A2012_210_001_001, TRT: 1:29:15 ?

Jennie Patrick talks about growing up in Gadsden, Alabama. Patrick was born in 1949, and was raised in rural Alabama. Her mother, Elizabeth Patrick, was born in 1910 and raised in the Troup County area of LaGrange, Georgia. Her father,

James Patrick, was born in Chattahoochee County, Georgia. James Patrick's parents died when he was young, and he lived with an abusive uncle until he ran away at the age of fourteen. He then traveled by train to find work wherever he could. He met Elizabeth Patrick while working in Gadsden, Alabama. They married in 1932, and had five children - Joseph, Irma, Bobby, Jennie, and Judith. Patrick describes Gadsden, Alabama as a delightful place to grow up, and has fond memories of fresh berries, muscadines, milk, eggs, and chicken.

Video Oral History Interview with Jennie Patrick, Section A2012_210_001_002, TRT: 2:28:48 ?

Jennie Patrick describes her experience growing up on a farm in Gadsden, Alabama. As a child, she displayed a great curiosity about life and death, nature, and philosophy. Patrick attended James L. Cain Elementary School from first grade through seventh grade. Her fifth grade teacher, Mr. Anthony Nolls, and her sixth grade English teacher, Mr. Pinkie Bridges, impacted her significantly. Patrick then went on to attend Carver High School for eighth grade, where her favorite teachers were Mr. Morrell, who taught science, and Mrs. Crayton, who taught algebra. In ninth grade, however, Patrick became dissatisfied with her education at Carver High School because she had a very poor math teacher, who punished her for repeatedly correcting him in class. This motivated her to transfer to a white school when the Alabama schools were integrated in 1964.

Video Oral History Interview with Jennie Patrick, Section A2012_210_001_003, TRT: 3:29:10 ?

Jennie Patrick became one of the first black students to attend Gadsden High School in 1964. She describes the difficulty of the experience, both physically and psychologically. On her first day, she and her peers were greeted by an angry mob. She was physically attacked by white students on several occasions, and was demeaned by racist teachers. Though she worked on the school's newspaper, Patrick was not allowed to be a part of the National Honor Society despite her academic achievement. Encountering these challenges only intensified Patrick's resolve to succeed academically. She became stronger and continued to push herself to perform well.

Video Oral History Interview with Jennie Patrick, Section A2012_210_001_004, TRT: 4:28:35 ?

Jennie Patrick describes her years at Gadsden High School and the violence and discrimination that she experienced. She recalls that she had no support from local churches and civil rights organizations. While her first year was extremely difficult, things did improve during Patrick's second year. That year, larger, more athletic students enrolled, and the physical violence decreased, but the psychological assaults and isolation continued. Patrick graduated in 1967 and enrolled in Tuskegee University, where she faced discrimination as a woman. Patrick later transferred to the University of California, Berkeley to study chemical engineering. This was a difficult time because she also faced discrimination and financial hardship.

Video Oral History Interview with Jennie Patrick, Section A2012_210_001_005, TRT: 5:28:54 ?

Jennie Patrick experienced discrimination from students and professors at the University of California, Berkeley. She recalls the time that fellow students sabotaged her senior design project, and her Advanced Engineering Mathematics professor spit on the floor when he walked by her. Patrick performed well despite these challenges. She also recounts an experience in which Dr. John Prausitz, who treated her badly at the University of California, sought to make amends later. Patrick graduated with her B.S. degree in chemical engineering from the University of California, Berkeley in 1973. She reflects on her time there and what it taught her.

Video Oral History Interview with Jennie Patrick, Section A2012_210_001_006, TRT: 6:28:39 ?

Jennie Patrick talks about her experience at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where her doctoral research focused on the super-heated limit temperature of liquids. Upon graduation, Patrick received positive recommendations from her professors, and high praise from her PhD advisor, Robert C. Reid, with whom she had a difficult relationship. In 1979, Patrick became the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in chemical engineering. She then went to work at General Electric, where she worked on supercritical extraction. In 1983, Patrick began working at Philip Morris, where she used supercritical extraction to remove carcinogens from tobacco. Patrick then worked at Rohm and Haas, where she managed about thirty engineers.

Video Oral History Interview with Jennie Patrick, Section A2012_210_001_007, TRT: 7:29:25 ?

In 1985, Jennie Patrick began working at Rohm and Haas, in Bristol, Pennsylvania, where she was involved in improving employer productivity and founded the Chemical Engineering Research Group. In 1990, Patrick moved to Birmingham, Alabama to be near her mother, who had suffered a massive stroke. She worked for Southern Company Services, where she faced discriminatory termination. While she worked at Rohm and Haas, Patrick was also exposed to over 4,000 chemicals, which caused her to become ill. Her illness was exacerbated at Southern Company Services. In 1993, Patrick began teaching thermodynamics at Tuskegee University and mentored young women through the Honors Program at Tandem Hall. She enjoyed her time with the students, but returned to Birmingham to be closer to her parents. She then worked at Raytheon Engineers and Contractors.

Video Oral History Interview with Jennie Patrick, Section A2012_210_001_008, TRT: 8:28:51 ?

Jennie Patrick talks about her illness and the chemical engineering industry. Patrick describes some of the challenges she faces as a result of her chemical exposure. To help educate and advocate for the public interest, Patrick established the Environmental Wellness Institute. As a chemical engineer, Patrick has seen firsthand the nature of the chemical industry, which puts profits ahead of human safety. She discusses the making of scented products, which are made from petroleum waste products. Patrick encourages future chemical engineers to know the risks associated with a career in chemical engineering, to watch for their own safety, and to protect themselves as necessary. Patrick considers her love for humanity and her commitment to honesty to be her legacy. In the future, Patrick would like to work with educating children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Video Oral History Interview with Jennie Patrick, Section A2012_210_001_009, TRT: 9:12:15 ?

Jennie Patrick talks about her family. Patrick is married to Dr. Ben Glover, who is an internist. She married Dr. Glover, who also has an M.S. degree in chemical engineering, in 1987. Glover became a physician after Patrick became ill so that he could give her the proper care. Patrick is proud that both parents lived to see her earn her Ph.D. degree in chemical engineering. Her father took particular interest in her career, and often asked her questions about her work. Patrick hopes to combine her knowledge with technology, to reach a larger audience with her message about environmental dangers. She also desires to use her experiences to help students that study and work in hostile environments. Patrick would like to be remembered as a loving and compassionate person.