

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joseph N. Boyce

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Boyce, Joseph N.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Joseph N. Boyce,
Dates:	December 12, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	11 uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:27:52).
Abstract:	Newspaper editor Joseph N. Boyce (1937 -) was the first African American reporter at the Chicago Tribune, the first African American bureau chief for Time magazine, and the first African American senior editor of the Wall Street Journal. Boyce was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 12, 2012, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_256
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Newspaper editor Joseph N. Boyce was born on April 18, 1937 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Sadie Boyce. He studied biology at Roosevelt University and attended John Marshall School of Law in Chicago from 1965 to 1967.

In 1961, Boyce joined the Chicago police force, where he served for five years as a patrolman, district vice detective, evidence technician and police academy law instructor. In 1966, he was hired as the first African American reporter at the *Chicago Tribune*, where he covered the Nigerian Civil War and the Democratic National Convention of 1968. *Time* magazine recruited Boyce as a correspondent at the publication's Chicago bureau in 1970, where he wrote a series of articles on the emergence of urban gangs. Within three years, he was promoted to chief of the San Francisco bureau, where he covered the Patricia Hearst kidnapping and trial, the assassination attempts on President Gerald Ford, and the Moscone-Milk assassinations.

Boyce became chief of *Time*'s Atlanta bureau and southern region in 1979 and moved on to the position of deputy chief of *Time*'s New York bureau in 1985. The *Wall Street Journal* then hired him as senior editor for public and social policy in 1987, making him the first African American senior editor at the paper. He retired from the *Wall Street Journal* in 1998 and became an adjunct professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 1999. In 2001, Boyce was hired as an adjunct professor at Indiana/Purdue University's Indianapolis School of Journalism where he won the Alfred Bynum award for mentoring in 2006.

Boyce has been a member of various associations, including the National Association of Black Journalists, the Indianapolis Association of Black Journalists, and the Indiana Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. He was also a founding member of the National Association of Minority Media Executives (NAMME), and served as a consultant to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Boyce lives in Indianapolis with his wife Carol, with whom he has four children.

Joseph Boyce was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 12, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Joseph N. Boyce was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 12, 2012, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 11 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Newspaper editor Joseph N. Boyce (1937 -) was the first African American reporter at the Chicago Tribune, the first African American bureau chief for Time magazine, and the first African American senior editor of the Wall Street Journal.

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:

Boyce, Joseph N.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Boyce, Joseph N.--Interviews

African American newspaper editors--Interviews.

Minority college teachers--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Wall Street Journal

Occupations:

Newspaper 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 Joseph N. Boyce, December 12, 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 Joseph N. Boyce, Section A2012_256_001_001, TRT: 1:29:45 ?

Joseph Boyce describes his family background. His mother, Sadie Nelson was born on June 1, 1903 in Champaign, Illinois to Joseph Nelson and Estelle Anderson. His maternal grandfather, who was educated by his wife, was the wealthiest black man in Champaign and once loaned money to a Ford dealership. Boyce's mother was a teacher but she also worked as a social worker. She earned her master's degree from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign and taught at Prairie View A&M University and Xavier University. She met Boyce's father, the Reverend John Boyce, who was an Episcopal priest from Barbados, at Prairie View A&M University. Boyce's parents separated when he was three months old and he was not close to his father, who died in 1954. Boyce's uncle, Cecil Nelson won the Croix de Guerre in France. Boyce also talks about living in a rooming house in Danville, Illinois and working hard with his brother to support the family when his mother had a stroke while he was a student at Danville High School.

African American families--Illinois.

African American grandparents--Illinois.

African American mothers--Illinois.

Childhood and youth.

African American fathers.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph N. Boyce, Section A2012_256_001_002, TRT: 2:29:44 ?

Joseph Boyce talks about Sadie Nelson, his mother and his hero, and his close relationship with his older brother, who served in the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Army, and the U.S. Air Force in addition to holding jobs in security and photography. Boyce's mother lived independently from her family, although the wealth of his maternal grandfather and the division of his grandfather's estate provided temporary financial relief for Boyce's family. Boyce describes the sights, sounds, and smells of growing up in Danville, Illinois; the small town's racial makeup; being the only black student at Franklin Grade School; and his social life. Boyce also talks about living in a white part of town, being called an "Uncle Tom", the effect of systemic racism and sexism on America, managing his paper delivery route, and his mother's influence on how he spoke and love of reading.

African American mothers--Illinois--Danville.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

Childhood and youth--Illinois--Danville.

Brothers and sisters--Illinois--Danville.

Racism.

African Americans--Education, Elementary--Illinois--Danville.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph N. Boyce, Section A2012_256_001_003, TRT: 3:31:10 ?

Joseph Boyce talks about exercising his right to be served at a soda shop in Danville, Illinois; how his inquisitive nature led him into journalism; and attending churches of different denominations after being discriminated against at an Episcopal church. Although he was a good student in grade school where he had great teachers, he became interested in jazz and motorcycles while a student at Hyde Park High School, and shared many musical interests with his brother. He talks about the diversity he found in Chicago, and the vibrant, upper middle-class black culture of Chicago's Hyde Park around the Sutherland Hotel and Lounge which hosted jazz greats like Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk. He first discovered the vibraharp in high school, eventually taking lessons with

Michael Kaplan of the Civic Opera and gigging with Herbie Hancock and Don Goldberg.

Childhood and youth--Activities--Illinois--Danville.

African Americans--Religion--Illinois--Danville.

Jazz.

African Americans--Education, Secondary--Illinois--Danville.

African Americans--Education, Elementary--Illinois--Danville.

Hancock, Herbie, 1940-

Vibraphone.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph N. Boyce, Section A2012_256_001_004, TRT: 4:29:05 ?

Joseph Boyce talks about going on tour with the Dozier Boys at age nineteen during his sophomore year at Roosevelt University, returning to college after touring the country, and influential vibraphonists in his life like Lionel Hampton and Milt Jackson. In college, he partied and played in a lot of music gigs, which affected his performance in school. Boyce also talks about his two daughters, one from a previous relationship and one from his marriage at age twenty-four; the Summerdale Scandal; how he came to work for the Chicago Police Department; corruption within the department; his decision to attend John Marshall Law School; and Chicago's political demonstrations. Boyce was inspired to become a journalist after meeting a Chicago Tribune foreign correspondent at a demonstration. He left his job at the Chicago Police Department to work for the Chicago Tribune in 1966.

Roosevelt University.

Dozier Boys.

African American college students--Activities--Illinois.

African American children--Illinois.

Chicago (Ill.). Police Department--Corruption.

Demonstrations--Illinois--Chicago.

John Marshall Law School (Chicago, Illinois).

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph N. Boyce, Section A2012_256_001_005, TRT: 5:29:45 ?

Joseph Boyce talks about his early years at the Chicago Tribune after leaving the Chicago Police Department in 1966, participating in a housing march in Gage Park led by Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1966, and the political orientation of various newspapers in Chicago. At the Chicago Tribune, Boyce took great measures to prevent himself from being typecast as a black reporter covering the black community. He also persevered through incidents of racism in the workplace. Boyce talks about racial bias in the Chicago Tribune's coverage of the Black Panther Party, Ovie Carter's success, joining TIME magazine in 1970, and learning a lesson from Don Starr. In 1969, Starr recruited Boyce for his first foreign assignment to cover the Nigerian-Biafran War. In Lagos, Nigeria, Boyce experienced dangerous encounters with the Nigerian Army and with civilians; he made several failed attempts to enter Biafra; and he realized how Hollywood and the movies affected his perception of Africa.

Chicago Tribune (Firm).

Demonstrations--Illinois--Chicago.

Nigeria--Civil War.

Racism in the workplace--Illinois--Chicago.

Journalism--Africa.

Time, inc.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph N. Boyce, Section A2012_256_001_006, TRT: 6:31:16 ?

Joseph Boyce describes interacting with Nigerians while covering the Nigerian-Biafran War; the murders of two Black Panthers, Fred Hampton and Mark Clark; and how many of Chicago's liberal newspapers were not as liberal as they claimed to be. He also talks about other black journalists in Chicago including Lu Palmer at the Chicago Daily News, Betty Washington at the Chicago Defender, and Vernon Jarrett, Pam Johnson, and Angela Parker at the Chicago Tribune. While Boyce was at the Tribune, the paper hired Clarence Page, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and Boyce's good friend. During Boyce's coverage of the Memphis SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference] convention after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, he and two other reporters suppressed a story on Andrew Young and Sweet Willie Wine to protect The Civil Rights Movement. Boyce also describes the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, the SCLC Mule train, and the demonstrations in front of the Conrad Hilton Hotel.

Nigeria--Civil War.

African American journalists--Illinois--Chicago.

Page, Clarence, 1947-

Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Democratic National Convention (1968 : Chicago, Ill.).

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph N. Boyce, Section A2012_256_001_007, TRT: 7:28:45 ?

Joseph Boyce talks about racial bias at the Chicago Tribune and its impact on his coverage of the violence at Chicago's Conrad Hilton Hotel during the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and on his coverage of the black student takeover of the Bursar's Office at Northwestern University. In 1969, Boyce moved into Resurrection City in Washington, D.C. to chronicle the life of participants in the Poor People's Campaign; his work on Resurrection City appeared on the front page of the Chicago Tribune. Boyce also talks about on the triumphs of The Civil Rights Movement, and his decision to leave the Chicago Tribune for TIME Magazine in 1979, where he became the first bureau chief of color at the organization.

Racism in the workplace--Illinois--Chicago.

Chicago Tribune (Firm).

Democratic National Convention (1968 : Chicago, Ill.).

Norhtwestern University.

Civil rights movements.

Poor People's Campaign.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph N. Boyce, Section A2012_256_001_008, TRT: 8:30:17 ?

Joseph Boyce talks about his coverage of Jim Thompson's mob prosecutions while he was in TIME Magazine's Chicago office from 1970 to 1973. Boyce also talks about how the Republican Party has changed over the years as well as Jesse Jackson's contributions to the African American community and Jackson's shortcomings. In 1973, Boyce became the first black bureau chief of TIME's San Francisco office. During his time in California, Boyce hired Olivia Steward, and covered President Gerald Ford's attempted assassination, the Patty Hearst kidnapping, and the Symbionese Army. Boyce describes the double murders of Mayor George Moscone and Harvey Milk, racial profiling on the day of the Jim Jones' People's Temple deaths, and an Alaskan pipeline assignment, which challenged his editor's assumptions about life in Alaska. Boyce also talks about

being transferred to TIME's Atlanta office in 1979 and the Atlanta Child Murders of 1979 to 1981.

Time, inc.

Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-).

Jackson, Jesse, 1941-

Ford, Gerald R., 1913-2006.

Symbionese Liberation Army.

Milk, Harvey.

Jones, Jim, 1931-1978.

Trans-Alaska Pipeline (Alaska).

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph N. Boyce, Section A2012_256_001_009, TRT: 9:32:28 ?

Joseph Boyce describes his suspicions about Wayne Williams' involvement in the Atlanta Child Murders case. He also talks about the stories in the South that he covered as TIME's Atlanta bureau chief, including North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms' campaign. In 1985, he was transferred to TIME's New York office to mitigate inter-personnel conflict. In 1987, Boyce accepted a position as senior editor of The Wall Street Journal after he realized that TIME could no longer support his career growth. In his new role, Boyce was able to shape the Wall Street Journal's approach to black professionals, and to launch a conference on black entrepreneurship in partnership with Black Enterprise Magazine. Boyce also talks about his retirement in 1998 and the death of his second wife, Carol Boyce, in 2011. He closes by sharing the story of how he met his second wife.

Time, inc.

Wall Street journal.

Retirement.

Spouses--Death.

African American entrepreneurs.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph N. Boyce, Section A2012_256_001_010, TRT: 10:28:56 ?

Joseph Boyce talks about his second wife, Carol Boyce née Hill, and his involvement with a group of Chicago journalists including Vernon Jarrett, DeWayne Wickham, Les Payne, Paul Delaney, and Francis Ward. Once a board member of the National Association of Minority Media Executives (NAMME), Boyce left the organization because he disagreed with its fundraising approach. Boyce has been honored as a teacher, and continues to maintain a lifelong dedication to diversifying journalism. Boyce also talks about Les Brownlee, and Brownlee's mentee, Pam Johnson; his formative music-making years with Herbie Hancock, Leslie Rout, Billie Johns, and Billie Quinn; the initial stages of Herbie Hancock's career, from playing with Boyce to joining the Miles Davis Quintet; and his first gig with multi-instrumentalist, Rahsaan Roland Kirk.

Spouses.

Journalists--Illinois--Chicago.

Minority college teachers.

Jazz.

Hancock, Herbie, 1940-

Kirk, Rahsaan Roland, 1936-1977.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph N. Boyce, Section A2012_256_001_011, TRT: 11:26:41 ?

Joseph Boyce talks about moving to Atlanta, his adult children, the death of his mother, Sadie Nelson, and what he would do differently. Boyce reflects upon the consequences of racism in the job market, his legacy, and how he would like to be remembered. Boyce also shares advice for aspiring black journalists along with his hopes and concerns for the African American community, outlining two black Americas, and the need for change.

African American children.

Racism in the workplace.

Journalism--Mentoring.

African American mothers--Death.