

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Billie Wright Adams

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Adams, Billie
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Billie Wright Adams,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 17, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	3 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:21:20).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Medical professor and pediatrician Dr. Billie Wright Adams ( - ) was the program director in the Department of Pediatrics at Mercy Hospital. Adams has also been an associate clinical professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine, and has maintained a private practice. Adams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 17, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_187
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The daughter of a country doctor who accepted chickens and potatoes in lieu of cash for his services, Billie Adams followed in her father's footsteps, becoming one of Chicago's most beloved pediatricians.

Born in Bluefield, West Virginia, Adams received her bachelor's degree from Fisk University in 1950. The following year, she completed her graduate studies and received a Master's of Arts in Zoology from the University of Indiana in Bloomington. Intending to begin a career in research, Adams soon had a change of heart after realizing how isolating the work in a laboratory could be. She enrolled in medical school at Howard University and, following graduation in 1960, focused her efforts on pediatric medicine and completed her residency at Cook County Children's Hospital. Her professional responsibilities over the years have include Acting Program Director in the Department of Pediatrics at Mercy Hospital and Medical Center, Project Director of a Primary Care Pediatrics Training Grant funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, Acting Bureau Chief of the Chicago Department of Health, Bureau of Community and Comprehensive Personal Health, former president of the Chicago Pediatrics Society and coordinator of a medical student training program at Cook County Hospital.

For the past twenty years, Adams has been an associate clinical professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine and has maintained a private practice. In 1997, the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics named her Pediatrician of the Year. In 1999, she received the Chicago Medical Society Public Service Award. She is a member of the board of the Ounce of Prevention Fund. Adams is the widow of Frank Adams and the mother of Chicago attorney Frank Adams Jr.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Billie Wright Adams was conducted by Adele Hodge on September 17, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 3 Betacam SP videocassettes. Medical professor and pediatrician Dr. Billie Wright Adams ( - ) was the program director in the Department of Pediatrics at Mercy Hospital. Adams has also been an associate clinical professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine, and has maintained a private practice.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Adams, Billie

Hodge, Adele (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Dr. Billie Wright Adams--Interviews

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University of Illinois Chicago Professional Colleges. College of Medicine--Faculty--Interviews

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Pediatricians--Interviews

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Hospital administrators--Interviews

Medicine--Study and teaching--United States.

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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College of Medicine at Chicago

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

EducationMakers

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MedicalMakers

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## **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 Dr. Billie Wright Adams, September 17, 2002. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### **Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 7/2/2012 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## **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.

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## **Detailed Description of the Collection**

## Series I: Original Interview Footage, September 17, 2002

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Billie Wright Adams, Section A2002\_187\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:30 2002/09/17

Dr. Billie Wright Adams was raised in the college town of Bluefield, West Virginia. Education and community service were important values to her parents. Her father, William Morris Wright, had a medical practice serving the students at Bluefield State College. Adams describes Bluefield as the gateway to the coalfields; a major stop on the Norfolk and Western Railway, transferring coal east. Adams' father was active in the Lincoln University Alumni Association which along with local fraternal organizations, sponsored scholars and musicians who visited the town and the Adams' home. Adams attended segregated schools at the home of Mr. Toya and the Young Street School. She describes the segregated entrances of movie theaters in Bluefield. After accompanying her father as he visited patients on house calls, Adams decided to pursue medicine. Adams meets Frank Clinton Adams in college [Fisk University] and they were married when she was twenty-six years old.

University of Illinois Chicago Professional Colleges. College of Medicine--Faculty--Interviews.

Pediatricians--Interviews.

Hospital administrators--Interviews.

African Americans--Education--Southern States--History--20th century.

Slaves--Southern States--Social conditions.

Segregation in Education--West Virginia--Bluefield.

Coalfields--West Virginia--Bluefield.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Billie Wright Adams, Section A2002\_187\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:30 2002/09/17

Dr. Billie Wright Adams attended Fisk University and majored in zoology. While at Fisk, she met Frank Clinton Adams, a physical education major. They attended a fraternity dance together in their senior year and were married while Adams was in medical school. Adams described her home in Bluefield, West Virginia as a place where she heard jazz music and spirituals with musicians from Alabama State University staying over for dinner. In medical school, she considered OB-GYN as a specialty, but decided to become a pediatrician. Adams' upbringing was rooted in values of respect, which translated into her practice as a pediatrician. When Adams attended Cook County Hospital [1960-1961] for her internship she was one of two black interns and the only black woman at the time. She was impressed by the quality care and the good that could be done there.

Fisk University.

Segregation in higher education--West Virginia--20th Century.

Carl Van Vechten Gallery of Fine Arts.

O'Keeffe, Georgia, 1887-1986.

Medical education--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Billie Wright Adams, Section A2002\_187\_001\_003, TRT: 0:22:20 2002/09/17

Dr. Billie Wright Adams attended Cook County Hospital in Chicago, Illinois [1960-1964] for her internship, pediatric residency, and hematology fellowship and returned there to teach part-time. She instructed her students to respect children and to be flexible to work with all kinds of people. Adams compared the differences between the original and new architecture of the Cook County

Hospital building and reflected on alternate paths for her career. Adams discussed interests outside of medicine including basketball.

Diversity in the workplace--United States.

Medicine--Study and teaching--United States.

Cook County Hospital (Chicago, Ill.)

Transcultural medical care--Illinois.