



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lessly "Count" Fisher

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lessly "Count" Fisher
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lessly "Count" Fisher,
Dates:	March 10, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:09:31).
Abstract:	Bandleader, nightclub owner, and police chief Lessly "Count" Fisher (1923 -) owned The Carousel Club nightclub where such acts as Redd Foxx, Rodney Dangerfield, and John Coltrane performed. Fisher was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 10, 2007, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_082
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Band leader, nightclub owner, and police chief Lessly "Count" Fisher was born on August 19, 1923 in Canton, Mississippi to Ruby Mosby Fisher and future steelworker Seaser Fisher. Fisher was given the nickname of "Count" by Count Basie. He grew up in the New Edition section of East Chicago, Indiana and attended Calumet Elementary School, Garfield Elementary School, and Columbus School, Fisher graduated from Washington High School in 1941. An accident in the steel mill inspired him to join his cousin, Wallace Hayes playing drums for the Nightsteppers. Fisher, along with childhood friend Jack McDuff, learned to read music from Jesse Evans while working as driver and bodyguard for entertainment businessman, Jake Brennan.

Touring the Midwest, Fisher's band also included Schoolboy Porter, Johnny Mott, Bill Lane and Aretta Lamar. In 1951, he met and toured several cities with singer Eve Rene. Later reunited with Rene, they played Indianapolis' Joy Lounge and the Hubbub. Fisher married Eve Rene and established the Carousel Club in the late 1950s. Over the years, they featured The Hampton Family, Rodney Dangerfield, June Christie, Leroy Vinegar, Freddie Hubbard, George Kirby, Redd Foxx, Moms Mabley, Jimmy McGriff, Jack McDuff, John Coltrane and James Brown. The Fishers also participated in muscular dystrophy telethons with Lorne Greene. From 1963 to 1965, the couple operated the Chateau de Count et Eve near the Indiana State Capitol. There, they showcased Roy Hamilton, Lula Reed and Motown acts along with many other names.

In 1966, Fisher and Eve Rene moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan and performed at the London House as the house band. Eventually, Fisher moved away from show business and took a job as Sheriff's Deputy for Kent County, Michigan. He was also Idlewild, Michigan's first chief of police. Fisher and wife, Eve, now a retired civil servant, live in Grand Rapids. Their son, Rodney, is a musician who once portrayed Sir Nose D'Voidoffunk with George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic.

Lessly "Count" Fisher and his wife, Eve, live in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Lessly "Count" Fisher was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 10, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lessly "Count" Fisher was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 10, 2007, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Bandleader, nightclub owner, and police chief Lessly "Count" Fisher (1923 -) owned The Carousel Club nightclub where such acts as Redd Foxx, Rodney Dangerfield, and John Coltrane performed.

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:

Fisher, Lessly "Count"

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lessly "Count" Fisher--Interviews

African American jazz musicians--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Idlewild (Mich.)

HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

BusinessMakers

CivicMakers

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 Lessly "Count" Fisher, March 10, 2007. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/29/2011 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, March 10, 2007

Video Oral History Interview with Lessly "Count" Fisher, Section A2007_082_001_001, TRT: 0:29:02 2007/03/10

Lessly "Count" Fisher describes his family's background in Canton, Mississippi. The family moved to East Chicago, Indiana when Fisher was quite young. Fisher describes his former neighborhood in East Chicago, an African American neighborhood called New Addition; he remembers it as a dark, violent place where he would often get into fights. He also explains how he acquired the nickname "Count". He claims that he received the name from Count Basie.

African American families--Mississippi.

African American families--Indiana.

East Chicago (Ind.)

African American neighborhoods--Indiana.

Basie, Count, 1904-1984.

Video Oral History Interview with Lessly "Count" Fisher, Section A2007_082_001_002, TRT: 0:29:19 2007/03/10

Lessly "Count" Fisher recounts the beginnings of his musical career. He mentions that he learned to channel his aggression and interest in fighting into the activities of boxing and wrestling. In fact, Fisher began boxing with aspirations of winning a Golden Gloves title. He did not become interested in music seriously until he was nineteen or twenty years old and joined a local band called the Nightsteppers as the drummer. He continues to discuss his experiences as a child in East Chicago, Indiana. In order to make money, Fisher accepted a job as driver and bodyguard to a wealthy man who lived in the area.

African American children--Indiana.

High school athletes.

Golden Gloves Tournament.

East Chicago (Ind.)

Video Oral History Interview with Lessly "Count" Fisher, Section A2007_082_001_003, TRT: 0:29:20 2007/03/10

Lessly "Count" Fisher describes his work as a bodyguard. He explains that he was also using his free time to travel to gigs as a musician. Fisher mentions he often had the opportunity to record his music, but chose not to. He recalls performing occasionally for radio broadcasts. Fisher explains the circumstances under which he met his wife, Lois Eve. She is often referred to as Eve Rene, or simply Rene. She was a singer who would occasionally perform with his band. After the two married, they settled in Indianapolis, Indiana and bought a nightclub there. The couple owned and operated the Carousel Club and the Chateau de Count et Eve, both nightclubs in Indianapolis. He mentions several musical acts that he performed with or that performed in his clubs.

Nightclubs--Indiana--Indianapolis.

Music--Performance--Indiana.

Video Oral History Interview with Lessly "Count" Fisher, Section A2007_082_001_004, TRT: 0:29:15 2007/03/10

Lessly "Count" Fisher discusses his legacy. He mentions his children who are also musicians and recalls the interesting experience of running a nightclub while raising children. Fisher shares his thoughts about the African American community and provides his opinions on the current needs of the community.

He also narrates several of his personal photographs.

Police--United States--Michigan.

Police chiefs--United States--Michigan--Idlewild.

Nightclubs--Indiana--Indianapolis.

Video Oral History Interview with Lessly "Count" Fisher, Section A2007_082_001_005, TRT:
0:12:35 2007/03/10

Lessly "Count" Fisher discusses his legacy. He mentions his children and recalls the interesting experience of running a nightclub while raising children. Fisher shares his thoughts about the African American community and provides his opinions on the current needs of the community. He also narrates several of his personal photographs.

African Americans--Conduct of life.

Nightclubs--Indiana--Indianapolis.