

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jerry Harkness

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Harkness, Jerry, 1940-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jerry Harkness,
Dates:	July 12, 2000
Bulk Dates:	2000
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:25:53).
Abstract:	Basketball player Jerry Harkness (1940 - 2021) has played for both the New York Knicks and Indiana Pacers. Harkness was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 12, 2000, in Indianapolis, Indiana. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2000_024
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born in May 1940 in Harlem, New York, Jerry Harkness is an athlete of natural talents. As a student, he played every sport imaginable; however, when Jerry Harkness joined the basketball team at DeWitt Clinton High, his ability on the court became apparent. While attending Loyola University, his performance on the basketball court made sports history as Jerry Harkness led the team in scoring for three consecutive years. Nearly forty years after ending his collegiate basketball career, the 1,749 points he scored still remains the third highest in Loyola's history. As team captain in 1963, he led Loyola to the National Championship and was named the NCAA's Most Valuable Player.

Upon his graduation, Jerry Harkness decided to join the New York Knicks. In 1967, he was traded to the Indiana Pacers. Two years later, Jerry Harkness became a sportscaster in Indianapolis.

He also devoted much of his time to civil rights issues, by serving with the Indiana Human Rights Commission and working actively with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Currently, Jerry serves as Executive Director of the Indianapolis Chapter of 100 Black Men.

Harkness passed away on August 24, 2021.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jerry Harkness was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on July 12, 2000, in Indianapolis, Indiana, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Basketball player Jerry Harkness (1940 - 2021) has played for both the New York Knicks and Indiana Pacers.

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:

Harkness, Jerry, 1940-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Harkness, Jerry, 1940---Interviews

African American athletes--Interviews.

Sportscasters--Indiana--Indianapolis--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

National Basketball Association.

Occupations:

Basketball Player

HistoryMakers® Category:

SportsMakers

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 Jerry Harkness, July 12, 2000. 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 Jerry Harkness, Section A2000_024_001_001, TRT: 0:29:53 ?

Jerry Harkness describes his family background. His father, Lindsey Harkness, washed windows for the United Nations building in New York City, New York. He was often absent during Jerry Harkness' childhood, which put a lot of stress on his wife, Lucille Harkness. Lucille Harkness was born to Moses and Eliza Bailey in the early 1900s. Her extended family included land-owning farmers from Orange, Virginia, where Jerry Harkness spent his summers and had his first encounters with racism. Due to the pressures of raising two children with little money, Lucille Harkness suffered a nervous breakdown, forcing Jerry Harkness and his sister, Marlene, to live with Moses and Eliza Bailey for a few months. Harkness admired Moses Bailey, an elevator operator, and the Baileys' lifestyle.

A shy child who lacked confidence, Harkness was made aware of his athletic talent upon meeting Jackie Robinson at the Harlem YMCA. Harkness experienced difficulty in school, but stayed motivated by increasing his skill in basketball.

African American fathers--New York (State)--New York.

Childhood and youth.

African Americans--Education.

Racism--African American children.

Robinson, Jackie, 1919-1972.

African American mothers--New York (State)--New York.

Harlem Branch YMCA

Video Oral History Interview with Jerry Harkness, Section A2000_024_001_002, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

Jerry Harkness attended Frederick Douglass Academy in Harlem, New York City, New York and DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, New York City, New York. Harkness excelled athletically, but struggled academically as student. He became serious about playing basketball during his senior year in 1958, and was scouted by Walter November. November secured an opportunity for Harkness to play basketball for New York University, but Harkness failed the entrance exam. He graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School in 1958, but attended summer school to improve his academic performance in preparation for college. November helped Harkness secure a spot on the Loyola University Chicago basketball team which was led by Coach George Ireland in 1959. Harkness describes the challenges of adapting to Chicago, Illinois, and traveling to places like Mississippi to play basketball. Harkness also reminisced about his most memorable basketball games, including the historic 1963 NCAA championship against the University of Cincinnati.

Dewitt Clinton High School (New York, N.Y.).

New York University.

Loyola University of Chicago.

NCAA Basketball Tournament.

African American basketball players.

Video Oral History Interview with Jerry Harkness, Section A2000_024_001_003, TRT: 0:29:25 ?

After winning the 1963 NCAA Basketball Championship playing for Loyola University of Chicago, Jerry Harkness' notoriety skyrocketed. Once a shy man, Harkness handled his newfound fame irresponsibly, which strained his marriage and compromised his reputation among Chicago's growing community of Civil Rights activists. Harkness signed with the New York Knicks in 1963, but was cut after one season. The Quaker Oats Company hired Harkness as a salesman soon thereafter, and he relocated to Chicago, Illinois. Harkness was motivated to return to professional basketball after learning of the debut of the American Basketball Association in 1967. That year, Harkness traveled to Indianapolis, Indiana to try out for the Indiana Pacers, and was picked for the team. While playing for the Indiana Pacers, Harkness made the longest shot in professional basketball history. He left the team in 1969, and became the first black fundraiser for the United Way of Greater Indianapolis.

New York Knickerbockers (Basketball team).

Quaker Oats Company.

American Basketball Association (1967-1976).

Indiana Pacers (Basketball team).

United Way of America.

NCAA Basketball Tournament.

Video Oral History Interview with Jerry Harkness, Section A2000_024_001_004, TRT: 0:27:34 ?

Jerry Harkness left the Indiana Pacers basketball team in 1967, after which he took a job as a sportscaster for WTHR News Channel 13 in Indianapolis, Indiana. With no television broadcast experience, and as the only black person at the station, Harkness struggled in this position. Nevertheless, he stayed with WTHR until 1982. In 1970, Harkness was hired by the United Way of Greater Indiana, and became their first black fundraiser. Harkness excelled in this position, breaking fundraising records and building significant relationships in Indiana's black community. Harkness capitalized on these relationships when he set out to organize the Indiana Black Expo in 1970. Harkness left the Indiana Black Expo around 1972, and became with 100 Black Men afterwards. Harkness retired from the United Way of Greater Indiana around 1995. Harkness talks about today's athletes and their failure to contribute to society, as well as their future as owners of sports teams.

United Way of Indiana.

Sportscasters--Indiana--Indianapolis.

Athletes--Political activism--United States.

Sports and society--United States.

100 Black Men of America, Inc.

Video Oral History Interview with Jerry Harkness, Section A2000_024_001_005, TRT: 0:28:01 ?

Jerry Harkness talks about minority ownership of basketball teams, as well as what makes the ideal athlete. Harkness credits the skills that he gained being an athlete, like determination and drive, for helping him through the realities of life, like battling cancer. Lucille Harkness, Clara Paine, and Eliza Bailey, Harkness' mother, aunt, and grandmother, played a major role in shaping his life, as well. Harkness talks about his legacy, and gives words of advice to today's disenfranchised youth. He also considers the significance of African American history, as well as his hopes and concerns for the African American community. Harkness concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.

Photographs.

African Americans--Mentoring.

African American families.