

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with John Atchison

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Atchison, John, 1941-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John Atchison,
Dates:	April 2, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:22:28).
Abstract:	Hairstylist and salon owner John Atchison (1941 -) was regarded as one of the premier educators in the hair care industry. He owned the John Atchison Salon, located in New York and Los Angeles. Atchison was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 2, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_001
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Hairstylist and salon owner John Atchison was born in 1941 in Spartanburg, South Carolina. As an adolescent Atchison moved to New York City and finished high school there. Atchison grew up in close contact with his extended family and was initially motivated to be a hairstylist by watching one of his aunts do hair at her own beauty shop.

After finishing cosmetology school, Atchison worked at several salons before landing an assistant stylist position at the fashionable Vidal Sassoon salon. Rising

swiftly through the ranks, he was soon appointed manager and artistic director for the Vidal Sassoon salons in New York City. In 1976, Atchison branched out on his own with a salon in New York where his methods and techniques have been at the forefront of style. As a salon owner Atchison is a strong advocate for professionalism and has implemented apprenticeship and continuing education programs. Subsequently, Atchison went on to found a training center for hair care professionals as well as a line of products for African American hair. Through his organization, he has trained thousands of hairstylists in the United States and the Caribbean.

The John Atchison Salon now has two locations, New York and Los Angeles, and after 25 years as an owner Atchison is regarded as one of the premier educators in the industry. Atchison is a motivational speaker and lecturer, and has been awarded numerous honors including a citation from Modern Salon in 1999 honoring him as one of the 75 educators of the century. He is also a consultant to the New York City Board of Education's cosmetology program.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with John Atchison was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on April 2, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Hairstylist and salon owner John Atchison (1941 -) was regarded as one of the premier educators in the hair care industry. He owned the John Atchison Salon, located in New York and Los Angeles.

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:

Atchison, John, 1941-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hayes, Frank (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Atchison, John, 1941---Interviews

African Americans--Barbers--New York (State)--New York--Interviews.

African American businesspeople--New York (State)--New York--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Hair Stylist

Salon Owner

HistoryMakers® Category:

StyleMakers

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 John Atchison, April 2, 2001. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 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 John Atchison, Section
A2001_001_001_001, TRT: 0:29:14 2001/04/02

John Atchison describes his maternal family background. His grandfather, William McKissick, was an entrepreneur in Newberry, South Carolina. He married Gertrude McKissick, an American Indian, and gave birth to Atchison's mother, Edith Virginia Bell McKissick in the early 1900s. Atchison briefly talks about his father, John W. Atchison. A cab driver and entrepreneur, John W. Atchison nurtured his son's entrepreneurial spirit at a young age. Edith and John Atchison raised Atchison and his siblings, Freddie and Audrey, in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Atchison recalls memories of his childhood, including his love of cowboys and his desire to work hard at an early age. Spartanburg's thriving black business district played a major role in inspiring Atchison to own his own business. This inspiration, coupled with Atchison's desire to learn, shaped his decision to pursue a career in the hair industry.

African American families--South Carolina--Spartanburg.
Childhood and youth--Activities--South Carolina--
Spartanburg.

Inspiration.

African American communities--South Carolina--
Spartanburg.

Video Oral History Interview with John Atchison, Section
A2001_001_001_002, TRT: 0:26:38 2001/04/02

John Atchison describes his schooling experiences in South Carolina. After elementary school, he attended Carver High School in Spartanburg, South Carolina. In 1956, Atchison moved to the Bronx in New York City to live with his aunt. He attended Morris High School and transferred to Commerce High School, where he

graduated from in 1959. After high school, Atchison worked a number of jobs, from nurse's aide to transit authority employee. He decided to fulfill his dream of becoming a hairstylist around 1969. At this time, Atchison overcame his fear of sexual judgment, and enrolled in Wilfred Academy of Hair and Beauty Culture in Jamaica Queens, New York. Atchison talks about his first jobs, which included styling hair with his aunt and styling wigs. Atchison describes working for Walter Fountaine and getting hired at Vidal Sassoon Salon in the early 1970s, a critical point in his career. Atchison concludes by sharing the vision for African American haircare that inspired him to start his own business.

Education, Elementary--South Carolina--Spartanburg.

Education, Secondary.

Career development.

Beauty operators--New York (State)--New York.

Video Oral History Interview with John Atchison, Section
A2001_001_001_003, TRT: 0:29:08 2001/04/02

John Atchison was hired to work as the only African American at Vidal Sassoon Salon in New York City, New York, in 1970. A talented hairstylist, it did not take Atchison long to rise from assistant to manager of the three New York City Vidal Sassoon salons. Atchison talks about the challenges he faced as a trainee and manager at Vidal Sassoon. Atchison enrolled at New York University in the mid-1970s to take classes that would improve his management skills. This new skillset, coupled with his natural talent, led him to resign from Vidal Sassoon Salon and open the John Atchison Salon in 1976. While at Vidal Sassoon, Atchison's unmatched haircutting skill and willingness to explore work opportunities outside of the salon enabled him to build a celebrity clientele. Atchison comments on some of the well-known individuals that aided in his development as a stylist and contributed to the success of his salon. John Atchison also reflects upon his haircutting techniques and talent.

Minorities--Employment--United States.

New York University.

African American businesspeople--New York (N.Y.).

Beauty operators--New York (State)--New York.

Video Oral History Interview with John Atchison, Section
A2001_001_001_004, TRT: 0:29:42 2001/04/02

John Atchison describes shifting his focus from building his personal brand to education. Atchison talks about developing the Cultural Events Committee in the late 1990s. He co-created the committee with Felipe Bascome, Susan L. Taylor, and other industry professionals as a platform to showcase African American stylists' work, and as a means to increase their training opportunities. After developing the CEC, Atchison began to focus on training and educating hairstylists more intensely. He started filming, producing and selling educational haircutting tapes. Their success inspired him to create the John Atchison Training Center. Atchison shares the inspiration behind his haircare line, and reveals his plans for the future, which include going back to school and becoming an author. Atchison talks the economic and historical significance of the haircare industry as it relates to African Americans, and reflects upon the state of African Americans in the industry today. He concludes by considering his legacy.

African American businesspeople.

Beauty Operators--Studying and Teaching.

Hairdressing of African Americans--History.

African Americans--Education.

Mentoring in Education.

Video Oral History Interview with John Atchison, Section
A2001_001_001_005, TRT: 0:27:46 2001/04/02

John Atchison narrates his photographs

Photographs.