

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lucky Cordell

PERSON

Cordell, Lucky, 1928-2015

Alternative Names: Lucky Cordell; Moses Cordell

Life Dates: July 28, 1928-July 7, 2015

Place of Birth: Grenada, Mississippi, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Occupations: Radio Personality

Biographical Note

Disc jockey Moses “Lucky” Cordell, affectionately known as “The Baron of Bounce,” was born in Grenada, Mississippi, on July 28, 1928, to Grace and Moses Cordell. At age three, his mother died unexpectedly and his family moved to Chicago. Cordell attended Chicago Public Schools and graduated from Dunbar Technical High School in 1946. Shortly after graduation, Cordell joined the U.S. Army, serving in the Special Services Branch. While in the military, Cordell developed his theatrical ability. He received an honorable discharge in 1948. He was hired at WGES as a disk jockey in 1952 to work under Al Benson.

While working at WGRY in Gary, Indiana, Cordell hosted the popular show House of Hits. The show was well known for its audience participation and became a community favorite among African Americans in Gary. In 1956, local newspapers held an election for the “Honorary Mayor of the Negro Community” and Cordell won unanimously (beating four other radio personalities, religious leaders and political leaders). He held this honor for four years, until he decided not to run in 1960.

Cordell worked at several other radio stations in the Chicago area before taking a position as a disc jockey at WVON in Chicago. WVON, owned and operated by Chess Records, would become one of the most influential radio stations in United States history. Cordell became WVON’s program and music director in 1965, and in 1968 he was promoted to assistant general manager. After a change in station ownership in late 1970, Cordell became general manager. Under his leadership, the station increased its ratings and almost doubled the income received from advertising.

In the late 1960s, Cordell joined the Chicago Urban League. After retiring from the radio business, Cordell remained an active member of Chicago’s African American

community.

Cordell passed away on September 6, 2015.

Related Entries

James R. Doolittle, Jr. Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Dunbar Vocational Career Academy High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

diploma

Radio Institute of Chicago [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

United States Army [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1946 to 1948]

special services

WGES Radio [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1952 to 1954]

disc jockey

WGRY radio station [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1954 to 1961]

disc jockey

WGES Radio [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1961 to 1964]

disc jockey

WVON Radio [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1964 to 1977]

disc jockey, program/music director, assistant general manager, general manager

National Association of Television and Radio Announcers [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Executive Secretary

Operation PUSH (U.S.) [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Chicago Urban League [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

American Federation of Television and Radio Artists [MEMBEROf]
[from 1986 to ?]

Member