

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Newton Collier

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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>	Collier, Newton, 1945-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Newton Collier,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 18, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:55:00).
<b>Abstract:</b>	R & B trumpet player and R & B trombone player Newton Collier (1945 - ) was a former member of Sam and Dave, best known for their song, "Soul Man." After a critical gunshot wound in the face, Collier was no longer able to play traditional instruments, but transitioned to a windblown synthesizer and later opened Collier's Records and Tapes. Collier was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 18, 2002, in Macon, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_014
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Newton Collier was born on July 23, 1945 in Macon, Georgia. His parents, Lucile Birdsong and Newton Collier, led a group called the Sweethearts of Rhythm. With his parents' example to guide him, Collier began playing piano at age six and the trumpet at ten. He started playing professionally with the Pinetoppers, the original band backing Otis Redding. Soon after graduating from Ballard Hudson High School in 1963, he joined Sam and Dave, who are best known for their 1967 Grammy award-winning song "Soul Man."

Sam and Dave's band broke up in 1970 after an international tour. The horn section formed a new band called LTD and moved to Boston. Collier worked on a freelance basis and married his sweetheart, Beverly Nelson. Their daughter, Charity, was born in 1973. Then, one night in 1976, tragedy struck. Collier was going home from an engagement when an unknown assailant shot him in the face. After three years of reconstructive surgery and recovery, Collier could speak well enough to be understood-but he could not withstand the pressure required to play the trumpet or trombone.

After the accident, Collier helped publish *Progressive Platter Music Review*. Having studied electronics at Boston's Wentworth Institute, he found work as an electronic technician-first at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1970 to 1976, then at Wells Fargo from 1976 to 1982. From 1979 to 1988, he worked in the fledgling computer industry at Honeywell Computers. In 1984, Collier learned of an instrument designed by John Steiner at M.I.T. called the E.V.I., Electronic Valve Instrument. This windblown synthesizer, sounding like a trumpet but requiring far less air, enabled Collier to play in Boston-area cafes and small clubs.

In 1988, Collier moved back to Macon and opened Collier's Records and Tapes, specializing in rare and collectible albums. Unfortunately, despite the store's magnificent collection, it did not turn a profit and closed in 1997. Collier now makes a living as a taxicab driver.

Bibliography: Who's Who in Black Music, 1984. p. 128.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Newton Collier was conducted by Samuel Adams on March 18, 2002, in Macon, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. R & B trumpet player and R & B trombone player Newton Collier (1945 - ) was a former member of Sam and Dave, best known for their song, "Soul Man." After a critical gunshot wound in the face, Collier was no longer able to play traditional instruments, but transitioned to a windblown synthesizer and later opened Collier's Records and Tapes.

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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:

Collier, Newton, 1945-

Adams, Samuel (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Collier, Newton, 1945---Interviews

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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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## Occupations:

R & B Trumpet Player

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R & B Trombone Player

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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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 Newton Collier, March 18, 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 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).

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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

Video Oral History Interview with Newton Collier, Section A2002\_014\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:54 ?  
Newton Collier was born on July 23, 1945 in Macon, Georgia. His mother

Lucille Birdsong Veal was born in Macon, Georgia to Eugene and Belinda Birdsong and attended Georgia Baptist College to become a teacher. His maternal grandmother was a stern woman who raised animals in Sparta, Georgia, His father, Newton Collier, Sr., was born in Fort Valley, Georgia and worked on ships before becoming a cook and working in the hotel system. His paternal grandmother's name was Flora Nelson, and she lived in Perry, Georgia. Collier had a close relationship with his mother who supported his interest in music and nursed him when he had spinal meningitis as a child. Collier only saw his father every few years but grew close to his stepfather, William C. Veal who worked in the chalk mines. Collier describes growing up in Macon, Georgia where he remembers being drawn to music especially the trumpet and listening to Ray Charles on WIBB Radio. He describes himself as a mischievous child and he recalls his favorite schoolteachers.

Video Oral History Interview with Newton Collier, Section A2002\_014\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:16 ?

Newton Collier talks about his childhood and early interest in music. After recovering from spinal meningitis, Collier made friends. Robert Scott, Collier's musical mentor, taught him about musical theory. At an Air Force Base band clinic in tenth grade, Collier met a trumpet player, Sammy Coleman. Coleman introduced him to Two Spot Club owner Clint Bradley who was the former manager Little Richard and James Brown. Collier spent many nights at the club where he met Sammy Davis, Jr. and observed musicians until he eventually was able to play with the club's band. Collier also played with female bandleader Gladys Williams who had tutored him in music from a young age. Collier recalls smells from the box factory and large mosquitos in Macon, Georgia. Collier also recalls watching Otis Redding and his friends sing doo wop in the neighborhood. After graduating from Ballard Hudson High School, Collier attended Morris Brown College and then went on tour with Otis Redding and Leroy Lloyd and the Swinging Dukes.

Video Oral History Interview with Newton Collier, Section A2002\_014\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:12 ?

Newton Collier talks about his career as a musician. Although he spent a lot of time at Clint Bradley's club, Collier stayed out of trouble and only occasionally drank alcohol. Collier describes Clint Bradley's elaborate schemes to promote his club and turn a profit. After graduating from Ballard Hudson High School in 1963, Collier played trumpet for Sam and Dave, who are best known for their 1967 Grammy award-winning song "Soul Man." Collier describes life on tour as incredibly demanding and rife with drugs. He recalls playing gigs in the South during the Civil Rights Movement. In addition to playing the horn, Collier also produced and arranged songs for Sam and Dave. Collier shares how he learned of his friend's Otis Redding's plane crash and death on December 10, 1967. He talks about Redding's personality and their last conversation. Collier decided to take a break from music, and he moved to Boston, Massachusetts.

Video Oral History Interview with Newton Collier, Section A2002\_014\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:09 ?

Newton Collier shares memories of watching the Doo Wop musicians in his neighborhood who taught Otis Redding how to sing. Collier talks about how Redding inspired and encouraged his musical career. Collier took a hiatus from touring with Sam and Dave. During this time, he freelanced, married Beverly Nelson, and had a daughter, Charity, in 1973, but he split from his wife shortly thereafter. Collier and the horn section formed a new band called LTD in Boston, Massachusetts. Collier modeled his promotion of LTD after Clint Bradley's promotion. This led to sold out club performances in New England and LTD signing with a record label. By the mid-1970s, Collier moved exclusively to promotion while taking courses in electronic engineering in order

to work at Massachusetts Institute of Technology [MIT]. Collier worked as a technician at NASA's space center and befriended astronaut Ronald McNair.

Video Oral History Interview with Newton Collier, Section A2002\_014\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:25 ?

Newton Collier describes the night in 1976 when an unknown assailant shot him in the face while he was driving home from an event in Boston, Massachusetts. Collier had reconstructive surgery and three years of rehabilitation, but he was no longer able to play the trumpet or trombone. In 1984, Collier learned of an instrument designed by John Steiner at M.I.T. called the E.V.I., Electronic Valve Instrument, a windblown synthesizer which allowed Collier to play music again. He talks about his friend Ronald McNair's death aboard the Space Shuttle Challenger in 1986. In 1988, Collier moved back to Macon, Georgia and opened Collier's Records and Tapes, specializing in rare and collectible albums. Collier was inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame. Collier talks about his parents' deaths and learning of his Native American heritage after his father's death. He describes the chittling circuit, the role of music in the African American community, and concludes the interview by reflecting upon his legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Newton Collier, Section A2002\_014\_001\_006, TRT: 0:27:04 ?

Newton Collier talks about discrimination his band faced when touring in the South during the 1960s. Collier contrasts the sounds and musical stylings that came out of various cities. He says that Motown out of Detroit, Michigan was sophisticated and slick whereas the Memphis, Tennessee sound was bluesy and the Macon, Georgia sound was overlaid with gospel, R&B and Jazz. He talks about how he learned to write music charts. Collier concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.