

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Frank Lumpkin

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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>	Lumpkin, Frank
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Frank Lumpkin,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 6, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	3 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:26:28).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Labor leader and steelworker Frank Lumpkin (1916 - 2010 ) is the organizer of the Save Our Jobs Committee. Under his leadership, the group protested for workers' rights in Illinois and Washington, D.C, and succeeded in winning multiple court settlements that totaled \$19 million. Lumpkin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 6, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_082
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born the third of 10 children on October 13, 1916, Frank Lumpkin is known for winning a 17-year fight against a steel mill, but he also participated in numerous other struggles for social justice. His family, sharecroppers in Washington, Georgia, moved to Florida to pick oranges when Lumpkin was six years old. At age 13, he lost two fingers when others dared him to touch a power line. Two years later, Lumpkin left school to pick fruit full-time.

As a young man, Lumpkin boxed well enough to fight professionally. He also worked in the orange groves and as a chauffeur. Following a brother who found better pay as a steelworker, Lumpkin moved to Buffalo, New York and took a job at Bethlehem Steel in 1941. Joining the merchant marines in 1943, he took part in a strike organized by the integrated National Maritime Union and his belief in communism took hold.

In 1949, Frank Lumpkin moved to Chicago and married Beatrice. The Wisconsin Steel Mill hired Lumpkin in 1950, and he quickly led an unsuccessful movement to bring a national union to his workplace. Lumpkin continued at the plant until 1980, when it closed down in a corrupt scheme to cheat its workers out of their last paychecks, pensions and benefits. The in-house union refused to fight, and Lumpkin organized the Save Our Jobs Committee. Under his leadership, the group picketed offices in Illinois and Washington, D.C. Fighting hard and long, Save Our Jobs finally succeeded in winning multiple court settlements that totaled \$19 million. Although this represented a small monetary victory for the 2,500 workers the committee represented, Lumpkin succeeded in showing that united, people are strong.

Lumpkin has fought throughout his life for such causes as racial justice, living wages and peace. Mayor Harold Washington appointed him to task forces on hunger and dislocated workers. Frank and Beatrice Lumpkin have traveled internationally, visiting Eastern Europe and Russia behind the Iron Curtain as well as Africa and Latin America. Lumpkin remained a member of the Communist Party and the Save Our Jobs Committee, until his

death on March 1, 2010.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Frank Lumpkin was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 6, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 3 Betacam SP videocassettes. Labor leader and steelworker Frank Lumpkin (1916 - 2010 ) is the organizer of the Save Our Jobs Committee. Under his leadership, the group protested for workers' rights in Illinois and Washington, D.C, and succeeded in winning multiple court settlements that totaled \$19 million.

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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:

Lumpkin, Frank, 1916-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lumpkin, Frank, 1916---Interviews

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African American Steelworker-Interviews.

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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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 Frank Lumpkin, June 6, 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 7/9/2012 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, June 6, 2002

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Lumpkin, Section A2002\_082\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:07  
2002/06/06

Frank Lumpkin slates the interview and gives his favorites. He was born in October of 1916 in Washington, Georgia and was the third of ten children. Lumpkin's father, Elmer Lumpkin was a sharecropper. His mother, Hattie (née Martin) Lumpkin washed clothing for a living and performed farm work-- in addition to raising her large family. When Lumpkin was approximately six

years old; his family moved to Orlando, Florida, where his father worked on an orange grove. Lumpkin attended elementary school in the basement of a Baptist church in Orlando. He walked a total of ten miles back and forth to school each day. Lumpkin went to Jones High School, also located in Orlando, but dropped out in the ninth grade. After leaving high school, Lumpkin wanted the chance to get out into the world and make a living. He did this by leaving Orlando and moving to Buffalo, New York. As a young man, he boxed well enough to fight professionally. However, the sport was not his main source of income.

African American families.

African American fathers.

Sharecropping.

Church schools.

Segregation in education--Florida.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Lumpkin, Section A2002\_082\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:14  
2002/06/06

Frank Lumpkin moved to Buffalo, New York and got a job at Bethlehem Steel in 1941. In 1943, Lumpkin joined the Merchant Marines. He worked in the tool room changing the burners on the ships but was never drafted into World War II. Hitching a ride from Buffalo, Lumpkin moved to Chicago, Illinois in 1949 and married his wife Beatrice. He lived on the South Side of Chicago and began working at Wisconsin Steel Works in 1950. He worked with the company for over thirty years. Lumpkin recalls how he would organize workers to discuss ways they could convince Wisconsin Steel to increase their wages. For example, if the workers decided not to work, then that would put pressure on the company to pay workers the salaries they sought. Lumpkin had to be careful when organizing meetings because if the foreman on duty caught the men during one of their gatherings, they could be fired. As a result, Lumpkin would also invite workers over to a bar called the Square Deal on 106th and Torrance Avenue, on Chicago's Southeast Side, to talk and have beers.

African American boxers.

Boxing.

Steel-works--United States.

Labor rights.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Lumpkin, Section A2002\_082\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:07  
2002/06/06