

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Willye B. White

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com  |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | White, Willye B., 1939-2007   |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Willye B. White,   |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | July 2, 2002  |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2002  |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:15:02).   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Long jumper Willye B. White (1939 - 2007 ) has competed in five Olympic games and is the founder of the Willye White Foundation, helping children to develop self-esteem and become productive citizens. At sixteen, she earned a silver medal in the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games, becoming the first American woman to ever medal in the long jump. White was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 2, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2002_112   |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.   |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Willye B. White was born to run. Born on December 31, 1939, in Money, Mississippi, and raised by her grandparents, White discovered her talent for running and jumping at age ten. At sixteen, she competed in the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games and became the first American woman to ever medal in the long jump, earning a silver medal. She participated in the next four Olympiads as well and is the first American to compete on five Olympic track and field teams. She

won another silver medal in the 1964 Tokyo Games in the 4-by-100-meter relay. White competed in more than 150 nations as a member of thirty-nine different international track and field teams.

In 1959, White graduated from Broad Street High School in Greenwood, Mississippi, the same year she set an American record for the long jump, which stood for sixteen years. She moved to Chicago in 1960 and began working as a nurse in 1963, first at Chicago's Cook County Hospital, then at the Greenwood Medical Center. In 1965, White became a public health administrator at the Chicago Health Department. She graduated with a B.A. degree in public health administration from Chicago State University in 1976. White remained active in the field of sports. She represented track and field on the U.S. Olympic Committee, coached athletes in the National Sports Festival in 1979 and 1981, coached and managed at the 1981 World Cup Track and Field Championship Games in Brussels and Rome, and served as head coach for the 1994 Olympic Sports Festival.

In 1990, White founded WBW Hang on Productions, a sports and fitness consultancy. A year later, she founded the Willye White Foundation, helping children to develop self-esteem and become productive citizens through such initiatives as the Robert Taylor Girls Athletic Program. This program taught sports and teamwork to children living in the nation's largest housing project (which has been demolished), a summer day camp and healthcare in the form of immunizations and dental and medical checkups.

White was the first American to win the world's highest sportsmanship award, the UNESCO Pierre de Coubertin International Fair Play Trophy. She is a member of eleven sports halls of fame, including those of the National Association of Sport and Physical Education, Black Sports, Women Sports Foundation, and National Track and Field. She was chosen by Sports Illustrated for Women in 1999 as one of the 100 greatest athletes of the century and by Ebony in 2002 as one of the ten greatest black female athletes.

White passed away from pancreatic cancer on Tuesday, February 6, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Willye B. White was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 2, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Long jumper Willye B. White (1939 - 2007 ) has competed in five Olympic games and is the founder of the Willye White Foundation, helping

children to develop self-esteem and become productive citizens. At sixteen, she earned a silver medal in the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games, becoming the first American woman to ever medal in the long jump.

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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:**

White, Willye B., 1939-2007

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
White, Willye B., 1939-2007--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:**

Long Jumper

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

SportsMakers

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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 Willye B. White, July 2, 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 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).

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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 Willye B. White, Section  
A2002\_112\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:08 2002/07/02

Willye B. White recalls her family background and her childhood years. She focuses in particular on the role her grandparents played in raising her, and her relative social isolation on account of her strange coloration. White also discusses how she became involved in athletics, and remembers her early success in track and field.

Video Oral History Interview with Willye B. White, Section  
A2002\_112\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:56 2002/07/02

Willye B. White details her experiences winning the Silver Medal at the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, Australia, as well as the hard work leading up to that event. She recalls her years with Tennessee State University, during which she traveled the country to attend track and field competitions. She describes her training and the self-motivation it takes to be a professional athlete. White concludes the interview by discussing some of the challenges she faced as an Olympian, such as competing without a coach against drug-enhanced athletes.

Video Oral History Interview with Willye B. White, Section

A2002\_112\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:12 2002/07/02

Willye B. White describes her life back in Greenwood, Mississippi, in between track and field competitions and the Olympic Games. She remembers her first newspaper clippings, her wild teenage years, and explains why she left Tennessee State University for Chicago. White recounts her experiences at the 1960 Olympics in Rome and the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo. She also recalls meeting Paul Robeson and facing discrimination in nursing programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Willye B. White, Section

A2002\_112\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:54 2002/07/02

Willye B. White recalls the tumultuous events at the 1968 and 1972 Olympic Games, including the student riots in Mexico City, the civil rights demonstrations by black athletes, and the kidnapping and assassination of Israeli athletes by Palestinian terrorists in Munich. She shares her personal disappointments at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City and her last Olympic trials in 1976. White concludes by discussing the rewards of her long athletic career, and her work with young athletes at the Willye White Foundation.

Video Oral History Interview with Willye B. White, Section

A2002\_112\_001\_005, TRT: 0:15:52 2002/07/02

Willye White ponders her legacy and how she would like to be remembered, particularly in her hometown of Greenwood, Mississippi. She describes her visits to Mississippi, and her feelings of rootlessness now that her parents are gone.