

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Charlene Jordan

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Jordan, Charlene, 1924- |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Charlene Jordan, |
| Dates: | June 21, 2002 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2002 |
| Physical Description: | 3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:29:57). |
| Abstract: | Salon owner and hairdresser Charlene Jordan (1924 -) was the founder of Charlene's House of Beauty, the oldest continuous business in Denver's Five Points neighborhood. Jordan was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 21, 2002, in Denver, Colorado. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2002_115 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Charlene Jordan, proprietor of Charlene's House of Beauty, operates one of the oldest African American-owned businesses in Denver, Colorado's Five Points district. She was born on July 2, 1924 in the country near Nashville, Arkansas. Life was hard for young Charlene and her family. Her father, Miles Jordan, lost the family land to unscrupulous white officials while her mother, Curlie Hill Jordan, struggled to make ends meet. Jordan had to work long hours in hot cotton fields for ten cents an hour. Her nephew was attacked by a mob and disappeared within earshot of her house.

After graduating from high school in 1943, Jordan joined Roosevelt's National Youth Administration and left Arkansas. Recruited to work for Boeing Aircraft Company in Seattle, Washington with other youth, Jordan also served as a "tank scaler" in Vancouver, British Columbia. She returned to Arkansas in 1948 and attended the Velvatex College of Cosmetology in Little Rock. She then moved to Denver, Colorado. Jordan took a refresher course at Duncan Beauty School, enhancing her hot comb pressing technique before opening her own "House of Beauty." She joined the Colorado Hair Dressers and Cosmetologists Association and the Success Club of America, becoming a member of the Incomparable 75. Later she purchased storefronts on Welton Street, now better known as "Jordan's Corner."

Denver's rich and poor alike have sought Jordan's services, including some of the top entertainers and celebrities that appeared at the Rasonian Hotel and other historic Five Point venues. Over the years, Charlene Jordan has become a pillar and anchor of Five Points. Of her many accomplishments, she is most proud of her daughter.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Charlene Jordan was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 21, 2002, in Denver, Colorado, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Salon owner and hairdresser Charlene Jordan (1924 -) was the founder of Charlene's House of Beauty, the oldest continuous business in Denver's Five Points neighborhood.

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:

Jordan, Charlene, 1924-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jordan, Charlene, 1924---Interviews

African American businesswomen--Interviews.

African American business enterprises.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Beauty Shop Owner

Hairdresser

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 Charlene Jordan, June 21, 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).

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 Charlene Jordan, Section
A2002_115_001_001, TRT: 0:30:31 2002/06/21

Charlene Jordan narrates her photographs and describes her family background. Her parents, Curlie Hill and Miles Jordan, were born in Nashville, Arkansas between the late 1800s and the early 1900s. After her mother died, Curlie Hill married Miles Jordan to avoid caring for her brothers and sisters. Miles Jordan worked for the Works Progress Administration building bridges and digging ditches. The couple gave birth to Charlene Jordan on July 2, 1924. The family owned farmland and a home, but lost it after Miles Jordan mortgaged their home to keep his sister out of jail. As a girl, Jordan dreamed of leaving Nashville, Arkansas. After graduating from Childress High School around 1942, she began working for the National Youth Administration. Jordan moved to Seattle, Washington and worked as a tank scaler for Boeing Aircraft Company. She then moved to Tacoma, Washington to work as a ship scaler. After completing her service, Jordan enrolled in Velvatex College of Beauty Culture in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Nashville (Ark.)--Social life and customs--20th century.

African Americans--Arkansas--Social conditions--20th century.

African American families--Arkansas.

United States. Works Progress Administration.

United States. National Youth Administration. Office of Negro Affairs.

Video Oral History Interview with Charlene Jordan, Section
A2002_115_001_002, TRT: 0:29:24 2002/06/21

Jordan names her fourteen siblings, and describes her experiences attending Childress High School in Nashville, Arkansas. After graduating in 1943, Jordan worked for the

National Youth Administration. In 1948, she enrolled in Velvatex College of Beauty Culture in Little Rock, Arkansas. She then moved to Denver, Colorado to live with her brother and take her state board exams. Jordan's prejudiced exam proctor failed her on shampooing, and Jordan was forced to complete cosmetology school again. Jordan lived in Denver's Five Points neighborhood, where she was able to see artists like Nat King Cole and Muddy Waters perform. When she opened Charlene's House of Beauty in the 1950s, she styled the hair of stars like HistoryMaker Merald "Bubba" Knight and Chuck Berry. Jordan opened her salon with the help of a small business loan. She was a member of the Five Points Black Business Association and had connections with businesswomen like A'Leila Walker and Marjorie Stewart Joyner.

Childress High School (Nashville, Ark.)

Five Points (Denver, Colo.)--History--20th century.

African American churches--Arkansas--History.

Racism--United States--20th century.

Berry, Chuck

Brown, Clarence, 1924-2005

Beauty culture--United States--History.

Video Oral History Interview with Charlene Jordan, Section
A2002_115_001_003, TRT: 0:30:02 2002/06/21

Charlene Jordan opened Charlene's House of Beauty in Denver, Colorado, in the 1950s. She explains the hairstyling process, which includes trying to understand her clients' needs and making sure they are comfortable. Because she was religious, Jordan did not allow gossip or negative behavior in her shop. Jordan shares stories of her styling mishaps, like accidentally making a client go bald. Jordan was a member of the Five Points Business Association and the Colorado Hair Dressers and Cosmetologists Association. Though she styled wigs for a while, Jordan's tried and true talent was the press and curl. She describes how hair styles have evolved since the 1940s, and the differences between styling white and black hair. Denver has seen changes over time that Jordan feels affected the black community negatively.

Nevertheless, Jordan tried to keep tradition alive by leading the community's Juneteeth celebration. Jordan closes by sharing her favorite sayings and how she would like to be remembered.

Five Points (Denver, Colo.)--History--20th century.

Hairdressing of African Americans.

Beauty culture--Economic aspects--United States--History--20th century.

Beauty culture--United States--History.