

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Alonzo Pettie

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Pettie, Alonzo, 1910-2003
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Alonzo Pettie,
Dates:	June 17, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:28:08).
Abstract:	Cowboy Alonzo Pettie (1910 - 2003) is the oldest living African American cowboy in Colorado. Pettie, a storyteller and speaker of some renown, is chronicled in the Black American West Museum and Heritage Center in the Five Points district of Denver. "The Champ," or "Ole Alonzo," as he is called, has been an active member of the Colorado Black Cowboys and Horseman Association member since its formation. Pettie was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 17, 2002, in Denver, Colorado. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_120
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Named for a grandfather born in slavery, Alonzo Pettie was born on June 18, 1910 in Tyler, Texas. His mother died in 1919 and after his father's death in 1926, Pettie learned to break horses to support himself. Two years later, he began working on a West Texas ranch, and the rancher saw his skill with horses and taught him to ride. Pettie began riding professionally in rodeos and, although he no longer rides horses, he has been a cowboy ever since.

In 1929, Pettie failed to dismount from a bucking bronco on the correct side in an Odessa, Texas, rodeo. He was thrown, dislocating his shoulder. Undaunted, he went on to win the bull riding contest the same day with his arm in a sling. In the years that followed, he suffered many serious injuries, including a ruptured navel that required surgery and a broken pelvic bone in 1930.

Pettie served in the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1944. Returning to the United States, he continued in the rodeo circuit, traveling to Colorado, Oklahoma and Texas. While competing in Colorado's first black rodeo in 1947, he broke his pelvic bone again, spending three months in a body cast. After that, he stopped riding broncos and bulls. In 1962, Pettie began working in the maintenance department at the Sears Seminary South store in Fort Worth, Texas. The next year, he tied for first place in a best-dressed cowboy competition. He transferred to Denver in 1965 and eventually retired from Sears ten years later. He continued to ride horses until 1995 and was featured in a 1996 Levi Strauss ad campaign for Red Tab jeans.

Pettie, a storyteller and speaker of renown, is chronicled in the Black American West Museum and Heritage Center in the Five Points district of Denver. "The Champ," or "Ole Alonzo," as he was called, was an active member of the Colorado Black Cowboys and Horseman Association member since its formation. Working with youth, the association organizes rodeo events with bareback riding, calf and steer roping, and barrel racing.

Pettie passed away on August 2, 2003.

Pettie was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on June 17, 2002.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Alonzo Pettie was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 17, 2002, in Denver, Colorado, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Cowboy Alonzo Pettie (1910 - 2003) is the oldest living African American cowboy in Colorado. Pettie, a storyteller and speaker of some renown, is chronicled in the Black American West Museum and Heritage Center in the Five Points district of Denver. "The Champ," or "Ole Alonzo," as he is called, has been an active member of the Colorado Black Cowboys and Horseman Association member since its formation.

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:

Pettie, Alonzo, 1910-2003

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Pettie, Alonzo, 1910-2003--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Cowboy

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Alonzo Pettie, June 17, 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).

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 Alonzo Pettie, Section A2002_120_001_001, TRT: 0:29:13 ?

Alonzo Pettie recalls his family background, and remembers where they lived along the Rusk/Gregg County line in Texas. He shares stories about growing up

in Longview, Texas, particularly his childhood activities.

Video Oral History Interview with Alonzo Pettie, Section A2002_120_001_002, TRT: 0:31:05 ?

Alonzo shares more details about his family background, including stories about slavery times. He recalls growing up in the rural South, where he spent time on his grandfather's farm, went to Saturday night dances, taught himself to ride rodeo, and learned the rules of racial segregation. He also remembers his sister's death.

Video Oral History Interview with Alonzo Pettie, Section A2002_120_001_003, TRT: 0:30:08 ?

Alonzo Pettie recalls his career as one of the few black cowboys in rodeo, particularly the several injuries he suffered riding horses and bulls. He also recounts his stint in the Army.

Video Oral History Interview with Alonzo Pettie, Section A2002_120_001_004, TRT: 0:28:03 ?

Alonzo Pettie recounts his duties in the Army, and discusses racial attitudes in the Armed Forces. He then shares some highlights from his career as a black rodeo cowboy, including being named Best Dressed Cowboy. He also recalls his post-rodeo career at Sears, Roebuck & Co.

Video Oral History Interview with Alonzo Pettie, Section A2002_120_001_005, TRT: 0:29:39 ?

Alonzo Pettie recalls some of the highlights of his career as a black rodeo cowboy, including modeling for Levi Strauss & Company's Red Tab jeans. He discusses some of the difficulties faced black cowboys, and shares his views on race and discipline. He also tells a funny anecdote about his brother's ornery mule.

Video Oral History Interview with Alonzo Pettie, Section A2002_120_001_006, TRT: ?

Alonzo Pettie narrates his photographs.