

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Barbara Bates

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bates, Barbara, 1955-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Bates,
Dates:	August 28, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:53:50).
Abstract:	Fashion designer Barbara Bates (1955 -) designs for celebrity clients and is the founder of the Bates Foundation, which provides custom-made prom dresses to underprivileged or hard-to-fit young women from inner-city schools in Chicago. Exotic fabrics and the use of leather trim are among the hallmarks of her designs. Bates was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 28, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_150
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Self-taught fashion designer Barbara Bates was born on June 27, 1955, in Chicago, Illinois. Her father, Elvin Hicks, was a school teacher and her mother, Vera, was a housewife. Bates went through Chicago's public school system and graduated from Marshall High School in 1962.

Bates worked a variety of jobs after graduating from high school, where she frequently designed the clothes she wore. In 1984, while working as a secretary for the First National Bank of Chicago, Bates began selling her clothing out of the bathroom during lunchtime. This experience led Bates to design clothes full-time and, two years later, she opened a 700 square-foot showroom, which is located in Chicago's South Loop.

In 1999, Bates founded the Bates Foundation to provide custom-made prom dresses to underprivileged or hard-to-fit young women from inner-city schools in Chicago. Bates' desire to make dresses for these women comes primarily from her own trials as a teen mother. Bates remembers the alternative school she attended as a pregnant fifteen-year-old and promised to make prom dresses for the girls that returned to high school and graduated. Bates has two sons, Eugene and Kristopher.

Bates Designs continues to be a leader in the world of fashion. Exotic fabrics and the use of leather trim are among the hallmarks of her designs. Bates has outfitted numerous celebrities including: Sinbad, Michael Jordan, Whitney Houston and Mike Tyson.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Barbara Bates was conducted by Adele Hodge on August 28, 2002, in

Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Fashion designer Barbara Bates (1955 -) designs for celebrity clients and is the founder of the Bates Foundation, which provides custom-made prom dresses to underprivileged or hard-to-fit young women from inner-city schools in Chicago. Exotic fabrics and the use of leather trim are among the hallmarks of her designs.

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:

Bates, Barbara, 1955-

Hodge, Adele (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bates, Barbara, 1955---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Fashion Designer

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 Barbara Bates, August 28, 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 Barbara Bates, Section A2002_150_001_001, TRT: 0:29:25 ?
Fashion designer Barbara Bates shares memories of her maternal grandmother and of spending summers with her in Mississippi. She also remembers living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with her aunt in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In addition, Bates describes her mother and her siblings. She remembers being a student in elementary and middle school, particularly her excellence in science and her dream to become a fashion designer. Finally, she discusses her search for her biological father when she was twenty-one years old.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Bates, Section A2002_150_001_002, TRT: 0:29:25 ?
Fashion designer Barbara Bates discusses meeting her father for the first time, when she was twenty-one years old, and the relationship that they developed.

She also remembers having her first child while in high school and graduating with honors a year early, in 1972. Bates reflects on being more interested in work than in college and, finally, her entry into the fashion design industry. From selling clothes in bathrooms, Bates discusses the fast growth of her business and celebrity clientele. She also discusses her commitment to her religious faith following the death of her cousin and business manager. Finally, she discusses the birth of her second son and eventually becoming a grandmother.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Bates, Section A2002_150_001_003, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

Fashion designer Barbara Bates reflects on the experiences of meeting and eventually divorcing professional football player Otis Wilson in 2002. She also discusses her personal strength and her tendency to be giving, especially through the Barbara Bates Foundation. She discusses her fashion philosophy and her business goals for the future. Finally, she discusses her sons, her civic and social activities and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Bates, Section A2002_150_001_004, TRT: 0:24:00 ?

Fashion designer Barbara Bates discusses how she selects the teen mothers and hard-to-fit girls to give prom dresses created by the Barbara Bates Foundation. She also reflects on her life and the support that she's received from her mother. Finally, she shares a multitude of personal photographs.