

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Charles McAfee

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	McAfee, Charles, 1932-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Charles McAfee,
Dates:	August 27, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:59:55).
Abstract:	Architect Charles McAfee (1932 -) is internationally recognized for his architectural work. McAfee is known for his work wide ranging work including; the renovation of Oklahoma City School District 89, Atlanta's North Line Midtown Station, Wichita's Calvary Baptist Church, and McAdams Park. McAfee was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 27, 2002, in Wichita, Kansas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_173
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Considered the most important African American architect in the United States, Charles McAfee of Wichita, Kansas, has used architecture to create opportunities for African Americans and make social commentary about racial inequality. Born in Los Angeles to Arthur and Willie Anna McAfee on Christmas Day, 1932, McAfee received his B.S. from the University of Nebraska. Beginning his career in the early 1960s, McAfee has developed and sustained Charles F. McAfee Architects and Planners, with offices in Wichita, Atlanta, Dallas and Oklahoma City.

The diversity and breadth of McAfee's career distinguishes him in his field. Throughout his career, he has been affiliated with countless architectural and urban planning projects, many receiving national recognition. McAfee's projects range from institutional facilities (renovation of Oklahoma City School District 89) to transportation structures (Atlanta's North Line Midtown Station), religious structures (Wichita's Calvary Baptist Church) to recreational facilities (McAdams Park), in addition to housing and commercial facilities. The significance of a regional structure, like Kansas's first national black historical society, is as striking as McAfee's national projects. His firm's projects have included the design and construction of FAA/NADIN computer facilities as well as design consultation and construction management of facilities for the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

In recognition of his distinguished career, McAfee has been the recipient of countless awards and distinctions, including the American Institute of Architects Kansas Chapter Excellence in Architecture Award and the Federal Housing Administration's First Honor Award. He serves on numerous professional and civic boards of directors, including the Catholic Social Services and the National Business League. Mr. McAfee has also served as the president of the National Organization of Minority Architects and Midwestern president of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Mr. McAfee maintains his commitment by providing mentorship to minority architects and planners, including his daughters Cheryl McAfee-Mitchell and Charyl McAfee-Duncan who run the family offices in Atlanta, Dallas and Oklahoma City. Mr. McAfee is married to Mrs. Gloria Winston McAfee, a dedicated educator and community leader.

Charles McAfee was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 27, 2002.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Charles McAfee was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 27, 2002, in Wichita, Kansas, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Architect Charles McAfee (1932 -) is internationally recognized for his architectural work. McAfee is known for his work wide ranging work including; the renovation of Oklahoma City School District 89, Atlanta's North Line Midtown Station, Wichita's Calvary Baptist Church, and McAdams Park.

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:

McAfee, Charles, 1932-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

McAfee, Charles, 1932---Interviews

African American architects--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Architect

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 Charles McAfee, August 27, 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 Charles McAfee, Section A2002_173_001_001, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Charles McAfee was born on December 25, 1932 in Los Angeles, California to Arthur J. McAfee, Sr. and Willie Anna McAfee. His father was from Wichita, Kansas and worked as a red cap. His mother was from Waxahachie, Texas. McAfee's parents settled in Wichita, Kansas where they raised three children. McAfee's maternal grandfather, Charles Brown migrated from Tennessee and owned a hotel in Oklahoma. McAfee's great-grandfather, Jacob McAfee was a member of the Union Army colored troops and fought in the Civil War. After the war, he migrated from Ohio to Kansas and became a wealthy landowner. McAfee's paternal grandfather was in the Kansas Colored Volunteers. McAfee's brother, Arthur McAfee, Jr. coached basketball at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. McAfee describes his childhood personality and neighborhood, as well as influential teachers from grade school. He graduated from East High School in Wichita and attended the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebraska where he played on the basketball team.

African American architects--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles McAfee, Section A2002_173_001_002, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Charles McAfee met Jackie Robinson as a teenager in St. Louis, Missouri when Robinson broke the color barrier in baseball in 1947. McAfee went to the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebraska and played basketball on scholarship. His parents sent him to the University of Nebraska to escape racial discrimination in Wichita, Kansas, but McAfee encountered racism on the basketball court and in his architectural courses. Before graduating in 1958, McAfee received a job offer from Paul Williams, a leading African American architect. Then in 1963, McAfee decided to start his own architectural firm, Charles F. McAfee Architects and Planners. That same year, McAfee won a National Design Award from the Federal Housing Administration at the age of twenty-nine for his work on the Eubanks House. He was honored in Washington, D.C. alongside of architectural giants like I.M. Pei, Mies van der Rohe, and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. McAfee describes his architectural excellence and his projects at Wichita State University.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles McAfee, Section A2002_173_001_003, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Charles McAfee had three daughters with his wife. When his oldest daughter was in high school, his family was the target of a hate crime: the windows of his home were broken and shots were fired into his home. McAfee describes the psychological impact of the event on him. Two of his daughters, Cheryl and Charyl are architects and work with their father. McAfee remembers when his family sent Cheryl to the Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. Charyl received her architectural training from the University of Texas School of Architecture. McAfee's projects include the 1996 Olympics, a \$35 million wrap of Atlanta's rail station and \$20 million of work designing computer centers for the FAA. McAfee tells of the racism he experienced throughout his career; the Wichita Club in Wichita, Kansas denied McAfee membership because of his race, but used McAfee's clout to recruit Bill Cosby for a fundraiser. McAfee discusses race relations in Wichita, which has been unwelcoming to African Americans professionals.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles McAfee, Section A2002_173_001_004, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Charles McAfee donated a kidney to his wife, Gloria McAfee. Their story was publicized by news outlets across the country like the Miami Herald, the Detroit Free Press, and the Charlotte Observer to raise awareness of kidney failure amongst African Americans. McAfee did not realize the impact the surgeries had on his daughters until he was honored at a NAACP roast. McAfee's architectural aesthetic is inspired by Bauhaus architect Mies van der Rohe's simplicity and African American architect pioneer Paul Williams. In addition to designing his own home, McAfee also created intimate homes for clients. His design for Andrew and Jean Young features Andrew Young's hand-carved cane collection; his design for an NBC executive led to the executive spending more time at home. McAfee talks about his friendship with photographer and filmmaker, HistoryMaker Gordon Parks. Parks told McAfee how Malcolm X had invited him to the Audobon Ballroom, but he had declined the night of the assassination of Malcolm X.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles McAfee, Section A2002_173_001_005, TRT: 0:29:55 ?

Charles McAfee describes design projects like the McKnight Art Center at Wichita State University, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza Station in Miami, Florida, and the North Line Midtown rail station in Atlanta, Georgia. To select building materials, McAfee bases it on the budget and aesthetic of his clients. He also developed McAfee Modular Systems, a nationally-recognized affordable housing system. McAfee opened a manufacturing plant with HistoryMakers and funeral directors Abner Jean "Val" Jackson and Anderson Eugene "Genie" Jackson in Wichita, Kansas to train workers in the community on the modular system. Throughout his career, McAfee has mentored aspiring architects by giving them experience at his firm and advocating for them. McAfee talks about the racial discrimination experienced by African Americans in Kansas including Jesse Owens, Barry Sanders, and HistoryMaker Gordon Parks. McAfee also shares his hopes and concerns for the African American community and how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles McAfee, Section A2002_173_001_006, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Charles McAfee describes his close family relationships. In addition to Mies van der Rohe and leading African American architect Paul Williams, McAfee was inspired by Thornton Clark, a lesser known architect, for his efficient use of building materials leaving almost no waste. McAfee hopes to secure financing that will enable him to address housing inequality by building affordable housing using McAfee Modular Systems. He also reflects upon his legacy and narrates his photographs.