

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Billie Wright Adams

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Adams, Billie Wright, Dr.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Billie Wright Adams,
Dates:	September 17, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:21:20).
Abstract:	Medical professor and pediatrician Dr. Billie Wright Adams (1935 -) was the program director in the Department of Pediatrics at Mercy Hospital. Adams also served as an associate clinical professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine while maintaining a private practice. Adams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 17, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_187
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Medical professor and pediatrician Dr. Billie Wright Adams was born in Bluefield, West Virginia. Her father, William Morris Wright, was a country doctor who accepted chickens and potatoes in lieu of cash for his services. Adams received her B. S. degree from Fisk University in 1950. The following year, she received her M. S. degree in zoology from the University of Indiana in Bloomington. Intending to begin a career in research, but not wanting to be isolated in the laboratory, Adams enrolled in medical school at Howard University. After receiving her M.D. degree in 1960, she focused her efforts on pediatric medicine, completing her residency at Cook County Children's Hospital. She then completed a fellowship in hematology at Cook Country Hospital from 1963 to 1964.

From 1964 to 1967, Adams served as a research associate in the Department of Hematology at the Hektoen Institute for Medical Research. She began teach as a clinical instructor at the Chicago Medical School in 1967. Adams served as an attending at Michael Reese Hospital in the pediatrics department in 1970 and then was appointed chief of the Pediatric Hematology Clinic at Mercy Hospital. Two years later, she joined the faculty of the University of Illinois in the Department of Pediatrics as a clinical assistant instructor. In 1976, she was promoted to clinical associate professor. Adams became the project director in 1980 of a United States Department of Health and Human Services funded grant for a Pediatric Primary Care Residency Program at Mercy Hospital. From 1981 to 1987, Adams served as the Assistant Program Director of Mercy Hospital & Medical Center's Department of Pediatrics. Her professional responsibilities over the years have also included acting bureau chief of the Chicago Department of Health, Bureau of Community and Comprehensive Personal Health; former president of the Chicago Pediatrics Society and coordinator of a medical student training program at Cook County Hospital.

Adams was recognized many times for her dedication to pediatric care. In 1997, the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics named her Pediatrician of the Year. She received the 1999 Chicago Medical Society Public Service Award and the 2012 Timuel Black Community Service Award from the Jazz Institute of

Chicago. Adams served on the board of the Ounce of Prevention Fund. Adams is the widow of Frank Adams and the mother of Chicago attorney Frank Adams, Jr.

Dr. Billie Wright Adams was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 17, 2002.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Billie Wright Adams was conducted by Adele Hodge on September 17, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Medical professor and pediatrician Dr. Billie Wright Adams (1935 -) was the program director in the Department of Pediatrics at Mercy Hospital. Adams also served as an associate clinical professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine while maintaining a private practice.

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:

Adams, Billie Wright, Dr.

Hodge, Adele (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

Adams, Billie Wright, Dr.--Interviews

African Americans--Interviews

University of Illinois Chicago Professional Colleges. College of Medicine--Faculty--Interviews

Pediatricians--Interviews

Hospital administrators--Interviews

Medicine--Study and teaching--United States.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Pediatrician

HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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 Dr. Billie Wright Adams, September 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 Dr. Billie Wright Adams, Section A2002_187_001_001, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Dr. Billie Wright Adams describes her family background. Her father, William Morris Wright, was born in Forsyth, Georgia and attended Lincoln University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to become a doctor. His family had been on the Rutherford plantation in Georgia and his father worked as a barber and undertaker. Adams' mother, Mamie Johnson Wright, was born on December 17 in the early 1900s. Wright's father was William Thomas Mitchell Johnson, and her great grandfather was a post-reconstruction state senator from North Carolina. Members of Wright's family had been slaves at the Johnson plantation in North Carolina. Adams has one older sister, Francis Eileen Wright Sanders. Adams grew up in Bluefield, West Virginia, where her father hosted prominent individuals like Langston Hughes and Thurgood Marshall. Adams attended Mr. Toya's School, The Young Street School, Genoa Junior High School, and Genoa High School. Adams received her B.S. degree in zoology from Fisk University in 1950.

University of Illinois Chicago Professional Colleges. College of Medicine--Faculty--Interviews.

Pediatricians--Interviews.

Hospital administrators--Interviews.

African Americans--Education--Southern States--History--20th century.

Slaves--Southern States--Social conditions.

Segregation in Education--West Virginia--Bluefield.

Coalfields--West Virginia--Bluefield.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Billie Wright Adams, Section A2002_187_001_002, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Dr. Billie Wright Adams describes her educational experience and the beginning of her career in pediatrics. Adams attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where she studied zoology and where she met her husband Frank McClinton Adams. At Fisk, she remembers meeting Aaron Douglas, Arna Bontemps, Horace Cayton, St. Clair Drake, and Georgia O'Keeffe. In 1951, Adams received her M.S. degree in zoology from the University of Indiana in Bloomington. After pursuing a research-oriented program at the Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis, Adams decided to attend medical school and studied at the University of Illinois Medical College in Chicago and at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she received her M.D. degree in 1960. As a doctor, Adams focused on pediatric medicine. She completed her residency at Cook County Children's Hospital, where she was the only black female resident. From 1963 to 1964, she completed a fellowship in hematology at Cook Country Hospital.

Fisk University.

Segregation in higher education--West Virginia--20th Century.

Carl Van Vechten Gallery of Fine Arts.

O'Keeffe, Georgia, 1887-1986.

Medical education--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Billie Wright Adams, Section A2002_187_001_003, TRT: 0:22:20 ?

Billie Wright Adams reflects on her career and shares her philosophies about teaching. Adams returned to Cook County Hospital to teach part-time and describes the diversity of its patients and staff. She reflects on the importance of respect and compassion in the medical profession and the value she places on children. She ends the interview by reflecting on her legacy, regrets, and favorites.

Diversity in the workplace--United States.

Medicine--Study and teaching--United States.

Cook County Hospital (Chicago, Ill.)

Transcultural medical care--Illinois.