

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gerald Johnson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Johnson, Gerald, 1947-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gerald Johnson,
Dates:	December 3, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:00:20).
Abstract:	Newspaper publishing chief executive Gerald Johnson (1947 -) is the CEO and publisher of the Charlotte Post in Charlotte, North Carolina. Johnson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 3, 2002, in Charlotte, North Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_217
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Successful publisher Gerald Oren Johnson was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, on March 2, 1947, to Willie L. Johnson and Thomasina Johnson. He graduated from West Charlotte High School in 1965 and went on to earn a B.A. in mathematics from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1969 and an M.A. in mathematics from Villanova University in 1972.

From 1969 until 1973, Johnson worked as a programmer for Univac Sperry Rand. From 1969 to 1973 he taught mathematics and computer science and directed the Computer Center at Johnson C. Smith University. In 1978, he began working for

Bank of America as a programmer and was promoted to vice president. In 1986, Johnson became CEO and publisher of *The Charlotte Post* and chairman of the Consolidated Media Group.

Johnson has many civic and community affiliations. He has also received numerous awards and honors for his contributions to the city of Charlotte. He has served as a member of the Mechanics and Farmers Advisory Board, the First Ward Community Reinvestment Board, and the Goodwill Industries Board. He has been an active participant in the Community Building Initiative, the Arts and Science Council, the Charlotte Chamber's Minority Business Leader Institute, "CHARLOTTE READS" leadership committee, and Partners For School Reform. He has also been co-chairman of the Finance Committee of the New Arena Committee, first vice president and publicity committee chairman of Theater Charlotte, and secretary and second vice president of the Discovery Place Board.

Johnson is a member of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church and has two daughters, Tania and Patrice, both living in North Carolina, and one grandson.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gerald Johnson was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 3, 2002, in Charlotte, North Carolina, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Newspaper publishing chief executive Gerald Johnson (1947 -) is the CEO and publisher of the Charlotte Post in Charlotte, North Carolina.

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:

Johnson, Gerald, 1947-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Johnson, Gerald, 1947---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Newspaper Publishing Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakersI

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 Gerald Johnson, December 3, 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 Gerald Johnson, Section
A2002_217_001_001, TRT: 0:29:15 2002/12/03

Gerald Johnson talks about his family background. Johnson was born on March 2, 1947 in Charlotte, North Carolina. His mother, Thomasina McCullough Johnson, was born on November 2, 1919 in Chester, South Carolina. His father, Willie Lee Johnson was born on March 7, 1947 in Anderson, South Carolina, and later moved to Charlotte, North Carolina to find employment. After serving in World War II, his father became the first African American postman and a newspaper writer for the white-owned "Charlotte Observer." His father distributed African American newspapers and briefly owned his own publication. Johnson grew up in the Biddleville neighborhood of Charlotte, North Carolina and remembers the smell of burning coal to heat his house. Johnson recalls a close knit neighborhood and a happy childhood despite living in poverty and often getting in trouble. Johnson attended Biddleville Elementary School, Northwest Junior High School, and West Charlotte Senior High School where he excelled in mathematics.

Video Oral History Interview with Gerald Johnson, Section
A2002_217_001_002, TRT: 0:30:15 2002/12/03

Gerald Johnson talks about his education and early career. Johnson graduated from West Charlotte High School in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1965. Although his teachers underestimated him, Johnson earned the school's highest SAT scores and received scholarship offers to several colleges. Johnson earned his B.A. degree in mathematics from Lincoln University in Oxford, Pennsylvania in 1969. At Lincoln, Johnson heard Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Muhammad Ali, Bill Cosby, and Sidney Poitier speak. Johnson recalls the emotional turmoil across the country, on campus, and within himself following Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in 1968 during his junior year. Johnson took a job at UNIVAC Sperry Rand as a computer programmer. Johnson describes the huge and overheated primitive computers that took up entire rooms and the punch cards used for software programs. Johnson then earned his M.A. degree in mathematics from Villanova University in

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1972.

Video Oral History Interview with Gerald Johnson, Section
A2002_217_001_003, TRT: 0:30:15 2002/12/03

Gerald Johnson describes his career. Johnson worked for UNIVAC Sperry Rand and Leeds and Northrup in Pennsylvania as a computer programmer. In 1973, Johnson and his family moved to Charlotte, North Carolina where he taught math and computer science at Johnson C. Smith University for four years. Johnson then worked as a computer programmer at Bank of America for eighteen years. His father acquired “The Charlotte Post,” an African American newspaper, in 1974. Under his father’s leadership, the newspaper covered news, entertainment, and social topics. Following his father’s death from leukemia in 1986, Johnson became the paper’s CEO and publisher and started covering more controversial topics. He retired from the bank in 1996 to run the paper full-time. Johnson made Jalyne Strong the managing editor after she volunteered to write a story on a Ku Klux Klan march. Johnson explains that “The Charlotte Post” covers important issues such as police brutality although it does not cover crime beats.

Video Oral History Interview with Gerald Johnson, Section
A2002_217_001_004, TRT: 0:30:35 2002/12/03

Gerald Johnson talks about the racial conflict between African Americans and Hispanics as a growing number of Mexicans moved into predominantly black neighborhoods in Charlotte, North Carolina. “The Charlotte Post” received national attention for its coverage of the issue and the community made efforts to address these concerns. Johnson cites the public school system and the lack of affordable housing as the two biggest problems facing Charlotte, North Carolina. Despite these issues, Johnson states that the quality of life there is high due to the booming economy and the generosity of its residents. Johnson hopes that the black community and other races will embrace diversity. Johnson sees his legacy as the paper and wants to be remembered as someone who tried to make a difference. Johnson concludes by narrating his photographs.