

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable DeLawrence Beard

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Beard, DeLawrence
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable DeLawrence Beard,
Dates:	April 26, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:20:43).
Abstract:	Circuit court judge The Honorable DeLawrence Beard (1937 -) is a chief judge for the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court of Maryland. Beard is also an adjunct professor of law at the University of Maryland and American University. Beard was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 26, 2003, in Rockville, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_092
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The Honorable DeLawrence Beard was born in Okalona, Arkansas, on December 26, 1937. Graduating from high school in 1956, Beard joined the Navy, and served until 1959, when he was honorably discharged. He then enrolled in the University of Missouri, where he received a B.A. in political science in 1964. Beard began law school at Missouri in 1964, but withdrew a year later. He would later go on to enter the University of Baltimore School of Law in 1967, earning a J.D. in 1970. In 1977, Beard graduated from the Georgetown University Law Center with an LL.M.

After earning his B.A., Beard joined IBM Corporation in Washington, D.C., where he was a senior marketing representative. Even after earning his law degree, Beard stayed on with IBM, finally going on to practice law in 1974. That year, he began as a prosecutor, first in juvenile court, and the next year, moving to felony cases. By 1978, Beard had moved to the position of senior assistant state's attorney for Montgomery County, Maryland, supervising a team of attorneys and prosecuting serious offenses. Continuing his climb, Beard became a judge in the District Court for Montgomery County in 1982, and in 1984 became an associate judge to the Sixth Judicial Circuit of Maryland, which is also the appellate court. In 1996, Beard advanced to the position of chief judge for the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court, where he remains today.

Beard is also currently an adjunct professor of law at both the University of Maryland and American University in Washington, D.C. He has lectured to incarcerated individuals, giving them advice on life skills. Beard is a member of several Bar Associations and has received a Governor's Citation in 1998 for meritorious service to the state of Maryland.

Beard is married to Lillian, a pediatrician.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable DeLawrence Beard was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 26, 2003, in Rockville, Maryland, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Circuit court judge The Honorable DeLawrence Beard (1937 -) is a chief judge for the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court of Maryland. Beard is also an adjunct professor of law at the University of Maryland and American University.

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:

Beard, DeLawrence

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Beard, DeLawrence--Interviews

African American judges--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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 The Honorable DeLawrence Beard, April 26, 2003. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 1/21/2013 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, April 26, 2003

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable DeLawrence Beard, Section
A2003_092_001_001, TRT: 0:29:04 2003/04/26

DeLawrence Beard slates his interview and lists his favorites. Beard has no specific recollection of any of his grandparents since they died before he could meet most of them. Furthermore since Alex Haley's "Roots" had not yet invigorated interest in black personal histories, he was not told any stories of racism or slavery. Most of Beard's extended family was born in Okolona, Arkansas but Beard and his siblings were raised in St. Louis, Missouri. Okolona was very rural and rustic. Derex Beard, Sr. was born in Okolona in 1911. He was a man of few words, great patience, wisdom, understanding, and

compassion. Beard had the highest respect for his father. Derex worked as a boilermaker helper and eventually electrician with the Missouri-Pacific Railroad. Gladys Cook Beard was born in June 26, 1918 in Okolona, Arkansas. She encouraged Beard and his siblings to have an appreciation for the arts and civic responsibility. Beard and his family walked to school, church, and relatives since most destinations were short distances.

Family--History.

African Americans--Social conditions.

African American families--Missouri--Saint Louis.

African American families--Arkansas--Okolona.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable DeLawrence Beard, Section A2003_092_001_002, TRT: 0:31:00 2003/04/26

Beard lived in the central-western black district near downtown. His family moved north near Natural Bridge partly because the Supreme Court case *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948 forbade race-based covenants. Physics and history were Beard's favorite subjects at Sumner High School. Sensing great societal change, teachers and other adults repeated the phrase "Things are changing" and asked Beard and others to take life seriously. In the 1950s black media expanded with local black newspapers to magazines like *Ebony*, *Jet*, and the *Negro Digest*. Beard did well in school but was not inclined to attend college nor could he afford it. Beard left his machine shop work with McDonnell Aircraft when he was called from the Naval Reserve. Beard trained at Chicago before going to Norfolk, Virginia. His mother reminded him that he might face unaccustomed hostility from white southerners and that he should not make waves. Beard traveled to Naples and eventually joined the USS Franklin D. Roosevelt aircraft carrier.

African Americans--Social conditions.

African American families--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Franklin D. Roosevelt (Aircraft carrier)

School integration--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable DeLawrence Beard, Section A2003_092_001_003, TRT: 0:30:04 2003/04/26

Beard worked fire control on the USS Franklin D. Roosevelt but wanted to attend college despite good prospects for advancement. From 1960 to 1964 he enrolled at the University of Missouri in Columbia with a political science degree. He worked while enrolled at the UM law school but withdrew upon moving to Washington, D.C. He was an IBM salesman from 1965 to 1973. While there he met and married Lillian, a medical school student. Beard was awarded his JD from night school at the University of Baltimore. They both graduated in 1970. He joined the State's Attorneys Office as a prosecutor in 1974. He got his LL.M. with night school at Georgetown between 1974 and 1977. Beard did not have a burning desire to become a lawyer but excelled in law school. Because of civil rights and the growing corporate acceptance of racially mixed students and employees, Beard had fewer excuses than his father for poor professional advancement. From the 1970s to early 1980s he worked as a lawyer and a judge for Maryland district and circuit courts.

Sailors--United States.

Discrimination in employment--United States.

Trail practice--Maryland--Montgomery County.

University of Baltimore--Alumni and alumnae.

Georgetown University--Alumni and alumnae.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable DeLawrence Beard, Section
A2003_092_001_004, TRT: 0:29:50 2003/04/26

Beard enjoyed trying civil cases as a judge and survived two contested circuit court elections in 1986 and 2002. Beard taught law-related courses at George Washington University, Washington College of Law at American University, and the University of Maryland. Like all people, judges should be responsible individuals worthy of public trust. Beard presided over varieties of cases that were notable for legal principles but not well covered by the media and other cases that were well covered but did not have notable legal consequences. At least two of his judgments were reversed by Maryland's highest court. Education, even at the lowest job and income levels, will always help employment prospects since it is selection rather than rejection that advances applicants. Failing is different from failure since failing is temporary and is overcome with the right attitude. Blacks need to meet the expectations and challenges as the bar rises in front of them.

Trial practice--Anecdotes.

Law--Study and teaching.

American University (Washington, D.C.)--Faculty--Interviews.

University of Massachusetts at Boston--Faculty.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable DeLawrence Beard, Section
A2003_092_001_005, TRT: 0:20:45 2003/04/26

When Beard was a prosecutor he simply wanted to be remembered as a competent blue collar lawyer and, following his judgeship appointment, a good judge. He was fortunate to work with many qualified lawyers, judges, and legal support staff.