

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Wooten, Sr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Wooten, Robert, Sr., 1930-2008
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Wooten, Sr.,
Dates:	August 19, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:19:05).
Abstract:	High school administrator and choral director Robert Wooten, Sr. (1930 - 2008) is the founder and director of the Wooten Choral Ensemble gospel choir. Wooten was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 19, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_196
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Gospel conductor and lifelong resident of Chicago, Robert E. "Gene" Wooten, Sr., was the fourth of five sons born to Flora and John Henry Wooten on February 17, 1930.

While a student at Morgan Park High School, Wooten organized a gospel choral group, the Morgan Park Crusaders, in 1945. After graduation, Wooten was stricken by a serious illness and hospitalized for a year. After recovering from his illness, Wooten devoted his life and musical talent to serving his faith; in July 1949 he founded the Wooten Choral Ensemble, based at Beth Eden Baptist Church. Wooten received his B.S. degree in music education from the Chicago Musical Conservatory in 1956, and earned his M.S. degree in the same field from Roosevelt University in 1968.

The Wooten Choral Ensemble boasted more than sixty members, and traveled extensively to perform and preach the gospel. Its hallmark through the years was expressing a spiritual message through anthems, hymns, black spirituals, and gospel sounds. Wooten's group recorded several albums and appeared on many local radio and television programs.

Outside of the church, Wooten enjoyed a distinguished career as an educator. At Parker High School, Wooten led the school's choir to citywide fame and rose to the rank of assistant principal before becoming a district administrator. Wooten worked with the Chicago Board of Education until his retirement in 1994.

For his contributions to gospel music, Wooten received many awards and recognitions. Wooten accepted an honorary doctorate from Virginia Seminary College in 1983, and was recognized at the Chicago Gospel Festival in 1994 for his contributions to religious music. Wooten and his wife, Frances, were married in 1956; the couple raised three children.

Robert E. "Gene" Wooten, Sr., passed away on March 27, 2008.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Robert Wooten, Sr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 19, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. High school administrator and choral director Robert Wooten, Sr. (1930 - 2008) is the founder and director of the Wooten Choral Ensemble gospel choir.

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:

Wooten, Robert, Sr., 1930-2008

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Wooten, Robert, Sr., 1930-2008--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Choral Director

HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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 Robert Wooten, Sr., August 19, 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 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 Robert Wooten, Sr., Section A2003_196_001_001, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Gospel conductor and educator Robert Wooten discusses his early childhood, the loss of his mother at age three, his father's remarriage and some anecdotes from his early school years. Wooten also describes his parents' backgrounds and shares his earliest childhood memory. He describes his childhood home and neighborhood in Chicago's Morgan Park neighborhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Wooten, Sr., Section A2003_196_001_002, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Gospel conductor and educator Robert Wooten details his early interest in music and his musical education. He describes his years at Morgan Park High School where he joined the school jazz band. After two years at the Peters School of Business, Wooten says he followed his heart to the Chicago Conservatory of Music. He then explains the creation of the Wooten Choral Ensemble in 1949.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Wooten, Sr., Section A2003_196_001_003, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Gospel conductor and educator Robert Wooten talks about the early years of the Wooten Choral Ensemble. He then details his career as an educator and administrator in Chicago Public Schools. Wooten also discusses his career in music, recalling memorable performances, favorite students, and his favorite compositions and arrangements. Wooten considers the legacy of black music and explains the musical choices of the Wooten Choral Ensemble.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Wooten, Sr., Section A2003_196_001_004, TRT: 0:30:50 ?

Gospel conductor and educator Robert Wooten talks about the Wooten Choral Ensemble's musical collaborations over the years. He also considers his legacy and how he would like to be remembered. Wooten then narrates his personal photographs as they are recorded on videotape.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Wooten, Sr., Section A2003_196_001_005, TRT: 0:19:20 ?

Gospel conductor and educator Robert Wooten narrates his personal photographs as they are recorded on videotape.