Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Riggs, Enrique A., 1943-

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Enrique A. Riggs,

Dates: June 7, 2005 and September 17, 2003

Bulk Dates: 2003 and 2005

Physical Description: 7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:29:11).

Abstract: Dentist Dr. Enrique A. Riggs (1943 - ) co-founded the Small Business Stock Exchange of America in 1983 and has served on its board of directors. Riggs also served as a military academy liaison at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and was appointed as the North Atlantic Region Dental Commander in the U.S. Army Reserve. Riggs was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 7, 2005 and September 17, 2003, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2003_216

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Harlem dentist and businessman Dr. Enrique A. Riggs was born on June 3, 1943, in Panama City, Panama, to Winifred and Eric Riggs. Riggs is an active member of several civic organizations and the Army Reserve.

After earning his B.A. in psychology from Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, Riggs enlisted in the Army Reserve in 1968, rising to the rank
of colonel in the Dental Corps. He earned his master's degree in counseling from the State University of New York at Albany in 1971, and in 1978 he received his degree in clinical dentistry from Howard University. Since 1978, Riggs has been in private practice in Harlem at an office he owns with his wife. Riggs was a co-founder in 1983 of the Small Business Stock Exchange of America, providing growing and emerging companies with expansion capital. He earned an M.B.A. in finance from Iona College in 1997 with a certificate in international business.

Since 1995, Riggs has served as a military academy liaison at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He is responsible for recruiting cadets from the New York area and minority cadets from the nation at large. Following the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001, Riggs used his professional expertise to examine dental records and help identify victims at Ground Zero. In 2002, the U.S. Army Dental Command appointed Riggs North Atlantic Region Dental Commander in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Riggs has been active in a number of other civic and professional organizations, including the 100 Black Men, the American Association of Securities Dealers and the American Dental Association. He sits on the Boulé Foundation Board. He and his wife, Dr. Carol Morales, were married in 1983 and have one daughter, Myra Christine. Riggs lives with his family in White Plains, New York.

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### Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Enrique A. Riggs was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson and Shawn Wilson on June 7, 2005 and September 17, 2003, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Dentist Dr. Enrique A. Riggs (1943 - ) co-founded the Small Business Stock Exchange of America in 1983 and has served on its board of directors. Riggs also served as a military academy liaison at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and was appointed as the North Atlantic Region Dental Commander in the U.S. Army Reserve.

### 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:

Riggs, Enrique A., 1943-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Riggs, Enrique A., 1943---Interviews
Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Dentist

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


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 Dr. Enrique A. Riggs, Section A2003_216_001_001, TRT: 0:31:13 2003/09/17

Dr. Enrique A. Riggs was born on June 3, 1943 in Panama. His parents, Eric Riggs and Winifred Adams Riggs, were both born in Panama, but their parents moved to Panama as laborers for the construction of the Panama Canal. Riggs’ maternal grandparents are from Barbados and his paternal grandparents are Jamaican. Riggs’ father worked as a dental technician, a longshoreman and a staff person for the Panamanian regime prior to the family’s move to the U.S. As a child in Panama, Riggs attended Catholic school and lived near a major road. He also remembers watching traffic and people with his sister and beach trips with his father. In 1950, his family moved to Harlem, New York. Riggs describes how his street was divided into white Hispanic, Black Hispanic, Caribbean and African American sections. As a child, he enjoyed playing games in the street and developed an interest in jazz; he learned to play the drums and lived across the street from his cousin, musician Ralph MacDonald.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Enrique A. Riggs, Section A2003_216_001_002, TRT: 0:30:44 2003/09/17

Dr. Enrique A. Riggs attended P.S. 103, Booker T. Washington Junior High School and Stitt Junior High School in New York City, which Frankie and Lewis Lymon also attended. Actress Leslie Uggams lived across the street from Stitt. Riggs began playing drums as a junior high schooler and received guidance from his neighbors Jimmy Cobb who played with Miles Davis, and
Ben Riley who played with Thelonious Monk. In addition to playing jazz, Riggs played in the New York All-City High School Orchestra and the Minisink Warriors Drum and Bugle Corps in Harlem, New York. Besides music, Riggs ran track, played football, modeled and got involved with civil rights work. His parents were supportive of his endeavors though they worried about his interest in playing jazz because of its association with drug abuse. He reflects upon how well-regarded musicians found their sound.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Enrique A. Riggs, Section A2003_216_001_003, TRT: 0:31:16 2003/09/17

Dr. Enrique A. Riggs was a Boy Scout and became part of the Order of the Arrow. After he graduated from high school in 1961, Riggs intended to pursue his interest in jazz professionally, which his parents did not think was a good career. In 1963, he enrolled at Columbia University part-time while continuing to purse music. He eventually decided to consider accepting a track scholarship to Morgan State University or a football scholarship to Miami University in Ohio. Ultimately, he chose to attend Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio where he majored in psychology, pledged Alpha Phi Alpha, played football and ran track. Riggs talks about the school’s history, being mentored by university president Charles Wesley, and unrest on campus as the Civil Rights Movement came into full force. He also lists musical stars who attended the school including Leontyne Price, Frank Foster, Joe Ford, Nancy Wilson, and others.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Enrique A. Riggs, Section A2003_216_002_004, TRT: 0:29:54 2005/06/07

Dr. Enrique Riggs was drafted by both the NFL and the U.S. Army in 1968. He was drafted by the Green Bay Packers and played on the franchises farm team before being traded to New York. Riggs was in the NFL for two years. He recalls black players Herb Adderley and Willie Davis who played for the Packers and talks about black football players in the NFL and at HBCUs during that era. Riggs went through basic training as a reservist because he was in the NFL. Riggs earned his M.A. degree in counseling from SUNY Albany in 1971, while also
holding an off-season job with the Educational Opportunities Program counseling disadvantaged college students. Through his job he took a variety of graduate school admissions tests, but ultimately decided to study dentistry because he had an aptitude for it and he could begin practicing as soon as he graduated school. In 1978, he earned his degree from Howard University College of Dentistry. He talks about his dental professors.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Enrique A. Riggs, Section A2003_216_002_005, TRT: 0:28:57 2005/06/07

Dr. Enrique Riggs attended Howard University College of Dentistry in Washington, D.C. At the time, dental and medical students shared classes for the first two years before splitting off into their respective specialties. After graduating, did a residency with Dr. Marcus Moore in Harlem, New York, who he eventually bought his practice from, and completed a residency at Sydenham Hospital. Riggs remembers treating one older black woman who had never had a black doctor before. In the late 1983, Riggs started the Small Business Stock Exchange of America with a fellow Central State University alumnus, which they kept afloat for more than twenty years. Following its closure, Riggs became involved in efforts to start a teaching hospital in the Bahamas. In 1995, he returned to school to earn an M.B.A. degree. Riggs began playing the piano at the age of six and started playing the drums in junior high school. He talks about the legacy of musicians at Central State University, his alma mater.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Enrique A. Riggs, Section A2003_216_002_006, TRT: 0:29:01 2005/06/07

Dr. Enrique A. Riggs registered voters in Mississippi with SNCC during the 1960s. During his residency training at Sydenham Hospital in Harlem, New York Riggs was trained to be an oral surgeon. He explains that during World War II, black dentists were recruited into the U.S. Army specifically because of their experience with head and neck trauma which they encountered working in inner-city hospitals. Riggs has found that as a black dentist he is limited to practicing on black patients. A hallmark of Riggs’ career is when he helped identify the dead using dental forensics following the attacks on World Trade
Center in New York City on September 11, 2001. Riggs talks about presenting a threat analysis on an oil company as a business student, attempts to cut funding to his alma mater Central State University, and the problems with contemporary education. He also reflects upon the importance of historical study and learning from elders.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Enrique A. Riggs, Section A2003_216_002_007, TRT: 0:28:06 2005/06/07

Dr. Enrique A. Riggs was stationed in hospitals in Germany during the Gulf War. He has also stationed at Fort Bragg in North Carolina. In 1995, Riggs was put in charge of recruitment for the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in West Point, New York, where he focused on increasing the number of minority applicants. Riggs describes his process for achieving this and reflects upon his experience in the military as an officer. Riggs is a member of the 100 Black Men, the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, and the Boule. Riggs explains why agreed to be interviewed for The HistoryMakers and talks about why he thinks history is important. He describes his hopes for the African American community and reflects upon his life and his legacy. He also remembers the advice of HistoryMaker Ossie Davis.