

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Edward Brooke

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Brooke, Edward W. (Edward William), 1919-2015
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edward Brooke,
Dates:	September 23, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	10 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:37:20).
Abstract:	U.S. senator The Honorable Edward Brooke (1919 - 2015) was the first African American to be elected senator by popular vote, the first to be seated since Reconstruction, and the first to be re-elected. During the Vietnam war, he called for a ban on napalm; he also served on the National Commission on Civil Disorders and later was the first senator to call for the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon. Brooke was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 23, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_233
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Edward Brooke, III was born in Washington, D.C., on October 26, 1919. His father, Edward Brooke, Jr., was an attorney for the Veterans Administration for more than fifty years, and his mother, Helen, later worked on all of Brooke's political campaigns. Brooke entered Howard University at the age of sixteen, and earned his B.A. degree in sociology in 1941. After graduation, Brooke entered the U.S. Army and was sent overseas. A decorated captain in the all-black 366th Combat Infantry Regiment, Brooke defended men in military tribunals. During the Italian campaign, Brooke disguised himself as an Italian, crossing enemy lines to meet with the Italian Partisans and facing Nazi and Fascist troops.

Returning from World War II and experienced in legal proceedings, Brooke enrolled in Boston University Law School, earning an LL.B. in 1948 and an LL.M. a year later, as well as serving as the editor of the school's *Law Review*. While practicing law in Boston, Brooke began seeking political office. Despite good showings in several races between 1950 and 1960, he failed to win. However, in 1960, he was appointed chairman of the Boston Finance Commission, where he exposed corruption in many city departments. His popularity high from his work there, Brooke was elected to the office of Massachusetts Attorney General, becoming the first African American to hold that post in the nation. He remained in the office for two terms, and in 1966, he won election to the U.S. Senate, where he was the first African American to be elected by popular vote, the first to be seated since Reconstruction and later the only to be re-elected.

During his first term in the Senate, Brooke spent a great deal of time on the issue of the Vietnam War, traveling to Asia on fact-finding missions. Upon his return, he requested that the United States cease using napalm. He also began calling for an end to trade with South Africa because of its apartheid policies. In 1967, President Lyndon B.

Johnson appointed him to the National Commission on Civil Disorders, which made recommendations that ultimately took shape as the 1968 Civil Rights Act. Brooke later challenged Richard Nixon's Supreme Court nominees Hainsworth and Carswell, even though he had supported Nixon's bid for the presidency. Brooke later became the first senator to call for Nixon's resignation. Leaving Congress in 1979, Brooke spent another six years in private practice before retiring.

Brooke received thirty-four honorary degrees from the nation's most prestigious colleges and universities and numerous other awards, including the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP and the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit from the Italian Government. In 2000, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts dedicated a courthouse in his honor.

Brooke passed away on January 3, 2015 at the age of 95.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Edward Brooke was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 23, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 10 Betacame SP videocassettes. U.S. senator The Honorable Edward Brooke (1919 - 2015) was the first African American to be elected senator by popular vote, the first to be seated since Reconstruction, and the first to be re-elected. During the Vietnam war, he called for a ban on napalm; he also served on the National Commission on Civil Disorders and later was the first senator to call for the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon.

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:

Brooke, Edward W. (Edward William), 1919-2015

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brooke, Edward W. (Edward William), 1919-2015 --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Massachusetts

Occupations:

U.S. Senator

HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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 Edward Brooke, September 23, 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 The Honorable Edward Brooke, Section A2003_233_001_001, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Former US Senator, Edward Brooke details his childhood in Washington D.C. He remembers the pervasive segregation in all aspects of life. Brooke discusses his family background, rooted in Virginia slave plantations. He also details black life in Washington as a child of some privilege. His father was an attorney who believed in the power of education.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edward Brooke, Section A2003_233_001_002, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Former US Senator, Edward Brooke, describes his secondary school achievements and life as a 'city student' at Howard University. He details how important his involvement with Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity was to his social and future political development. He recalls meeting notable figures like A. Phillip Randolph, Haile Selassie, Alain Locke among others. He also recalls professors who were to become stellar figures like, Charles Hamilton Houston and Ralph Bunche.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edward Brooke, Section A2003_233_001_003, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Former US Senator, Edward Brooke, details his life as a second lieutenant in the Army during WWII. He recalls the oppressive weight of segregation and racism from fellow white soldiers and commanders while allegedly fighting for democracy abroad. Denied access to the same facilities as white soldiers and limited to guard duty, Brooke and the other exceptional men of the 366th were demoralized.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edward Brooke, Section A2003_233_001_004, TRT: 0:29:55 ?

Former US Senator, Edward Brooke, details his tour in the South Pacific during WWII. He recalls the indignities suffered by the men of the 366th Combat battalion. A segregated unit led by Howard University men, Brooke describes how the unit was misused for digging ditches when they were eager to see combat. He also discusses his marriage to a young Italian woman and how she was received when she moved to the States to be with Brooke.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edward Brooke, Section A2003_233_001_005, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Former US Senator, Edward Brooke discusses his entry into local then statewide politics. In a nonpartisan election for state representative, Brooke ran on the Democratic and Republican ticket, but lost on the Democratic ticket. Urged by Massachusetts political big wigs, Brooke made another stab for office, and lost again. Governor Herter urged him to run for Massachusetts secretary of state. Brooke also recounts some difficulties faced in the political arena due to his interracial marriage.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edward Brooke, Section A2003_233_001_006, TRT: 0:29:55 ?

Former US Senator Edward Brooke discusses his first run for Secretary of state for Massachusetts. He also details his run for Massachusetts Attorney General and the political odds against him succeeding. Brooke recalls one of his most famous cases, the Boston Strangler case, which he successfully prosecuted and some of the publicity generated by the case and subsequent feature film.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edward Brooke, Section A2003_233_001_007, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Former US Senator, Edward Brooke, recalls his years in Massachusetts state politics, his win for Attorney General and the fortuitous set of circumstances which led his to run for US Senator, making him the first black man to win since Reconstruction. Brooke describes the political wrangling in the Massachusetts Republican party when the Senate seat suddenly opened up.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edward Brooke, Section A2003_233_001_008, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Former US Senator, Edward Brooke, details his political losses and successes in Massachusetts as attorney general and later US Senator. He recalls the friction encountered as he bucked the established Massachusetts and Boston Brahmin power structure to run for office. Brooke also discusses his political friendship between himself and the Kennedy family.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edward Brooke, Section A2003_233_001_009, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Former US Senator Edward Brooke details his life as a two term senator. He held office during the unravelling of the Nixon presidency and Watergate. In fact, Brooke was the first Republican to call for him to step down. Brooke was also a voiciferous opponent of Nixon's Southern Strategy and attempts to place two segregationists on the US Supreme Court.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edward Brooke, Section A2003_233_001_010, TRT: 0:10:40 ?

Former US Senator Edward Brooke shares his thoughts on the future of black America, global issues, the Iraq War and his legacy.