

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Stuart Rankin

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Rankin, Stuart, 1936-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Stuart Rankin,
Dates:	October 9, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:34:56).
Abstract:	Advertising manager Stuart Rankin (1936 -) founded the Equinox advertising firm, that works with many global clients. Previously, he worked in advertising for Leo Burnett, Jesse Owens & Associates, and the New York Times Company. Rankin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 9, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_252
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Advertising executive Stuart Rankin was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, on November 24, 1936. After attending grade school there, his family moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, when he was eleven years old. Graduating from high school in 1956, Rankin went on to attend the Ohio State University, earning a B.S. in education in 1961.

Rankin began his career in advertising in 1963, working with Johnson Publishing. In 1965, he moved to Chicago advertising giant Leo Burnett, working with clients such as Procter & Gamble and Philip Morris. He was also part of a team that provided marketing seminars to M.B.A. students at Big Ten universities. Leaving Leo Burnett in 1971, Rankin joined Jesse Owens & Associates as a senior consultant and served as vice president. He remained there for ten years, working with Mercedes Benz and Walt Disney Productions, among others. Rankin became the advertising manager for the New York Times Company in 1981, and in 1987 he left to form Equinox Advertising. During his nine years there, he serviced such clients as Anheuser-Busch, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Ameritech.

Since retiring in 1996, Rankin has served as an advertising and marketing consultant to a number of organizations. He is married to Marlene Owens Rankin, the daughter of track star Jesse Owens, and has served as a special consultant to the Jesse Owens Foundation. Active as a teacher, as well, Rankin has taught courses at Northwestern University and in the Chicago Public Schools. Rankin is also active with the alumni advisory board of his alma mater, Ohio State, serving on both the advisory council to the president and the communications advisory committee to the president. Rankin and his wife have been married for more than forty years. They have one son.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Stuart Rankin was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 9, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Advertising manager Stuart Rankin (1936 -) founded

the Equinox advertising firm, that works with many global clients. Previously, he worked in advertising for Leo Burnett, Jesse Owens & Associates, and the New York Times Company.

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:

Rankin, Stuart, 1936-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Rankin, Stuart, 1936- --Interviews

Advertisers--Interviews

African American executives--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Advertising Manager

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Stuart Rankin, October 9, 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 Stuart Rankin, Section A2003_252_001_001, TRT: 0:30:18 ?

Stuart Rankin was born on November 24, 1936 in Springfield, Massachusetts. His mother, Luella Pettijohn Rankin, is descended, on her mother's side, from Oneida Indians and, on her father's side, from African Americans who can trace their heritage to Amherst, Virginia. One of Rankin's maternal relatives was a sharpshooter who traveled with Annie Oakley. Rankin's parents divorced when he was five years old and he lost contact with his father, Alanzo Rankin. He does recall that his paternal grandmother was part Scottish; he takes his middle

name, McLean, from her maiden name. After his parents' divorce, Rankin moved to Amherst to live with his maternal grandparents. Their house was heated by potbelly stoves and had a large vegetable garden. In third grade, Rankin was administered Kenneth and Mamie Clark's Doll. In 1944, his mother married Baron Jones, and the family moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, Jones' hometown in 1947. Rankin recalls stealing cases of 7-Up from a factory in his Cincinnati neighborhood.

Advertisers--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Stuart Rankin, Section A2003_252_001_002, TRT: 0:30:07 ?

Stuart Rankin was raised in his maternal grandparents' home in Amherst, Massachusetts from the ages of five to eleven years old. His grandmother was the housekeeper for the president of Amherst College and his grandfather was a bartender, positions which accorded them respect within the community. His grandmother once confronted a butcher who called him a Pickaninny. In 1947, Rankin moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. He describes his early exposure to music, stealing 7-Up from a factory, and his childhood friends. Rankin began school in Amherst and initially struggled in school in Cincinnati, but became a better student at Withrow High School in Cincinnati, where he played football and was vice president of his senior class. In 1956, he enrolled at The Ohio State University in Columbus; he majored in education with a focus on history. He recalls an influential history professor and a later encounter with a former economics professor. Rankin knew many of the Ohio State football players and Coach Woody Hayes.

Video Oral History Interview with Stuart Rankin, Section A2003_252_001_003, TRT: 0:29:27 ?

Stuart Rankin lived off-campus while he was a student at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio where he met his wife, HistoryMaker Marlene Owens Rankin, the daughter of Olympian Jesse Owens. Owens was a father figure to Rankin and the two later went into business together. Rankin's wife was the first black homecoming queen at OSU. Rankin describes how she was elected, the ball where she was presented to the university, and the trophy ceremony during halftime of the football game. Rankin graduated from OSU in 1961. After spending six months in the U.S. Army, he began teaching at Nathan Davis Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois. After a year, he transferred to Hyde Park High School in Chicago where he was fired for helping HistoryMaker Timuel Black develop an African American history curriculum. Rankin became disillusioned with the education system and accepted a job as a sales representative at Johnson Publishing Company where he met LeRoy Jeffries and Lincoln Hudson.

Video Oral History Interview with Stuart Rankin, Section A2003_252_001_004, TRT: 0:29:35 ?

Stuart Rankin explains the significance of Vince Cullers' and HistoryMakers John H. Johnson's, Thomas J. Burrell's and LeRoy Winbush's accomplishments as pioneering African Americans in the advertising industry. Rankin worked at Johnson Publishing Company for approximately two and a half years. During his first business trip for the company he got lost on his way to the airport. In 1966, Rankin accepted a position at Leo Burnett Worldwide, Inc. where he was an assistant account executive on the Nestle account. At Burnett, he worked with HistoryMaker Donald C. Richards to create a program to recruit more minorities. Rankin describes the discrimination against African Americans, Jewish people and women at Burnett. By 1971, Rankin found he could no longer advance his career at Burnett and he left the agency to start a marketing consulting firm with his father-in-law Jesse Owens. In 1980, Rankin was offered

a position in the New York Times magazine division as an advertising sales executive.

Video Oral History Interview with Stuart Rankin, Section A2003_252_001_005, TRT: 0:29:29 ?
Stuart Rankin founded Equinox Advertising with Bernie Washington and Bill Daniel in 1987. The agency's strategy was to create advertisements that drew people in because of its creative elements and also featured African Americans. The agency was successful; its clients included Reebok, Anheuser-Busch, Ameritech, Allstate and KFC. Rankin is especially proud of the agency's television commercials. However, the agency fought constantly with the larger white agencies they partnered with, which eventually took a toll on the agency's bottom line. Equinox turned down an offer to be acquired by a larger firm, TBWA\Chiat\Day. Rankin retired from Equinox in 1996. Since retiring, he owns a small company, McClean Scott Marketing, and does consulting for local businesses. Rankin talks about the decline of African American-owned advertising agencies and the changes in client fee structures in the advertising field. He describes his concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Stuart Rankin, Section A2003_252_001_006, TRT: 0:06:00 ?
Stuart Rankin reflects upon his legacy and considers what he would have done differently during his life. He concludes by describing how he would like to be remembered.