

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Emmitt J. McHenry

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	McHenry, Emmitt J., 1943-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Emmitt J. McHenry,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 22, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:14:55).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Telecommunications chief executive and telecommunications entrepreneur Emmitt J. McHenry (1943 - ) is the founder, chairman and CEO of NetCom Solutions International, Inc., a telecommunications, engineering, consulting and technical services company. McHenry was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 22, 2003, in Great Falls, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_280
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Emmitt J. McHenry is founder, chairman, and CEO of Enterprise Magazine's 10th ranked African American-owned business, NetCom Solutions International, Inc. He was born in Forrest City, Arkansas, on July 12, 1943, the grandson of a minister. Growing up in Tulsa, Oklahoma, McHenry attended Stewart Elementary School, Carver Middle School and Booker T. Washington High School. After graduating in 1962, he went on to receive his B.S. in communications from the University of Denver in 1966. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps,

where he attained the rank of lieutenant. McHenry would go on to Northwestern University, where in 1979 he earned his M.S. degree in communications. Here, he would also complete the qualifying examinations for a doctorate. McHenry held various management positions with IBM, Connecticut General, Union Mutual and AllState Insurance Company. He served on several insurance industry committees and was a founding member of the American Productivity Management Association. He then founded Network Solutions, Inc. the internet domain services provider, and in 1995, he founded NetCom Solutions International, a telecommunications, engineering, consulting, and technical services company. The company has received awards for excellent service from IBM, NASA and Lucent Technologies with revenues of \$260 million and over 200 employees in Chantilly, Virginia and Oklahoma City.

Today, McHenry serves as chairman of VisuTel, a broadband telecommunications company. McHenry is on the executive committee of the Council on Competitiveness, the board of directors for NetCom Solutions International, Ltd. (UK), and chairs the governance committee for the Phelps Stokes Fund. He is on the advisory board of DECIS Technology and is former chairman of the board of LearnCity, Inc. McHenry has also served on the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, the State of Virginia Economic Development Authority and the board of directors for James Martin Government Intelligence. He has also chaired the board of directors of NeCom Solutions South Africa.

McHenry's business engagements have taken him to Africa, Europe and Asia.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Emmitt J. McHenry was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 22, 2003, in Great Falls, Virginia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Telecommunications chief executive and telecommunications entrepreneur Emmitt J. McHenry (1943 - ) is the founder, chairman and CEO of NetCom Solutions International, Inc., a telecommunications, engineering, consulting and technical services company.

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## **Restrictions**

### **Restrictions on Access**

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The

## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

McHenry, Emmitt J., 1943-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

McHenry, Emmitt J., 1943---Interviews

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## Organizations:

## **Occupations:**

Telecommunications Entrepreneur

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Telecommunications Chief Executive

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

BusinessMakers

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## **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 Emmitt J. McHenry, November 22, 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 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Emmit J. McHenry, Section  
A2003\_280\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:15 2003/11/22

Emmit J. McHenry was born on July 12, 1943 in Forrest City, Arkansas. His parents, Mary Thurman Barnett and Herman McHenry, were born both in 1925 in Arkansas. McHenry recalls maternal family stories passed down about the supernatural and about lynchings—there were spiritual healers and psychic readers on both sides of the family. McHenry’s paternal grandmother was a minister and his mother worked as a presser, in retail, and as a nutritionist in the Arkansas public school system. McHenry’s father served in the U.S. military and worked as an auto-mechanic and traveling gospel singer. McHenry was sent to school in Kansas City, Missouri for the first grade and later sent to live with his paternal grandmother in Tulsa, Oklahoma at twelve years old. McHenry recalls his childhood hobbies and interests, as well as his grade school teachers and the vibrant community in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Video Oral History Interview with Emmit J. McHenry, Section  
A2003\_280\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:30 2003/11/22

Emmit J. McHenry describes the history of Greenwood “Deep Greenwood”, Oklahoma, one of the wealthiest black American communities in the twentieth century. McHenry’s grandfather was in the cement construction business in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and built sidewalks, streets, and storm shelters in the city after Greenwood was destroyed in the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot. McHenry talks about his involvement in politics as a youth in Oklahoma—he was elected Youth Mayor of Tulsa, and Youth

Secretary of State. McHenry attended Booker T. Washington High School in Tulsa, where he participated in student government, played football and wrestled, and worked. He graduated in 1962 and enrolled at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado. There, he was elected president of the Jewish fraternity Pi Lambda Phi. McHenry describes his undergraduate experiences at the University of Denver. He earned his B.A. degree in communications in 1966.

Video Oral History Interview with Emmit J. McHenry, Section A2003\_280\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:50 2003/11/22

Emmit J. McHenry earned his B.A. degree in communications from the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado in 1966. McHenry worked for IBM as a systems engineer in Denver before being transferred to Minnesota. Shortly after, he received a draft notice for the Vietnam War. Despite his opposition to the war, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. While in service, he was injured and discharged. In 1969, he took a job with Connecticut General Insurance Company and was involved in helping restructure the company. In 1970, McHenry attended Northwestern University School of Communication in Evanston; He began his dissertation while working as an assistant dean. He was recruited from Northwestern to Union Mutual in Maine while completing his dissertation. In 1979, he started Network Solutions with Ty Grigsby, Gary Desler, and Ed Peters. He began working for Allstate Insurance Company to keep himself financially stable, where he became Regional Vice President for the Northwest.

Video Oral History Interview with Emmit J. McHenry, Section A2003\_280\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:40 2003/11/22

Emmit McHenry describes how he and other black executives at Allstate Insurance Company strategized to make space for African Americans in senior positions. The group met privately to establish a support system for lower-ranking black executives. McHenry was promoted several times at Allstate but left in order to focus on his own company, Network Solutions, a domain name registrations company. Network Solutions became the sole registrar for internet domain names in the early 1990s. The

company also was first to approach the National Science Foundation about commercializing domain name registration. It was later sold to Science Applications International Corp (SAIC). At the time of the interview, McHenry operated two companies, NetCom Solutions International and VisuTel. He describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, talks about having grown up in poverty, and considers his legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Emmit J. McHenry, Section  
A2003\_280\_001\_005, TRT: 0:15:40 2003/11/22

Emmit McHenry considers his life, legacy, and how he would like to be remembered. He concludes by narrating his photographs.