

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Sengstacke

PERSON

Sengstacke, Robert A. (Robert Abbott), 1943-

Alternative Names: Robert Sengstacke;

Life Dates: May 29, 1943-March 7, 2017

Place of Birth: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Work: IL

Occupations: Photojournalist

Biographical Note

Photographer and heir of a distinguished African American newspaper publisher, Robert Abbott Sengstacke, popularly known as “Bobby,” was born May 29, 1943, in Chicago, Illinois. Named after the founder of the Chicago Defender, Robert Sengstacke Abbott, Bobby attended the University of Chicago Lab School, Manument boarding school in Pennsylvania and Howalton Day School in Chicago before attending Hyde Park High School. Sengstacke graduated from Central YMCA High School in 1962. Artistic and restless, he attended Florida’s Bethune Cookman College for three and a half years before returning to Chicago.

Growing up with the newspaper gave Sengstacke unique access to important events and people. Learning to shoot from Le Mont Mac Lemore, Billy Abernathy and Bob Black of the Chicago Sun-Times in the mid-1950s, Sengstacke’s thousands of black and white photographs of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Muhammad Ali, Gwendolyn Brooks, Amiri Imamu Baraka and other well-known figures, places and events were widely published. His compositions, Spiritual Grace and Saviour’s Day, are included in the “We Shall Overcome” exhibit and are from his days as staff photographer for the Nation Of Islam’s periodical, Muhammad Speaks. His work also appears in most Black Arts Movement anthologies of the 1960s and 1970s. Widely collected and archived, Sengstacke was recognized for his photography.

Sengstacke returned to the family business, joining with other family members in working with the Chicago Defender. He was active in helping to increase the circulation of the paper, which remains as one of the nation’s last African American daily newspapers.

Sengstacke was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on December 19, 2003.

Sengstacke passed away on March 7, 2017.

Related Entries

Central YMCA College [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Hyde Park Academy High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

University of Chicago Laboratory Schools [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

St. Ambrose Elementary School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Howalton Day School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

The Manumit School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Bethune-Cookman University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Chicago Defender [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1974 to ?]

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Freelance Photographer

Chicago Alliance of African American Photographers [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]