

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Clyde Martin

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Martin, Clyde, 1936-2017
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Clyde Martin,
Dates:	December 10, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:28:50).
Abstract:	Community activist Clyde Martin (1936 - 2017) staged protests as a student and later worked to integrate Jay's Potato Chips. The regional sales manager for Jay's, he also served as inspector for the Internal Affairs Division of the Cook County, Illinois, Sheriff's Department. Martin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 10, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_309
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Community activist and award-winning regional manager for Jay's Potato Chips Clyde Martin never ate snack foods until he moved to Chicago in 1955. Born on September 28, 1936, on land his father owned in Bolivar County, Mississippi, Martin attended school at the White Star Missionary Baptist Church and later graduated from Cleveland (Mississippi) Colored Consolidated High School (CCCHS) in 1955. An honor student and an activist, young Martin led a student strike for a more relevant curriculum. Later, he refused to cooperate with an agreement his principal made with the state of Mississippi to impress the federal government, under which the school was to receive new school buses, and then exchange them with the white school in Cleveland, for their old ones.

In 1956, Martin was working in Chicago when he found out about a job at Jay's Potato Chips. Hired as the first black route salesman, he determined that he could sell more Jay's by distributing more of the smaller five cent bags. Martin was right and he more than doubled his sales. Consistently the top salesman during the 1960s and 1970s, he made assistant regional sales manager in 1967 and was the first African American to rise to regional sales manager in 1973. Martin fought racism and personally made sure that Jay's hired other African Americans as drivers and salesmen.

Martin became an inspector for the Internal Affairs Division of the Cook County, Illinois, Sheriff's Department in 1978. He was a beloved behind-the-scenes activist in Chicago politics and civic life.

Martin passed away on November, 21, 2017 at age 81.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Clyde Martin was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 10, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community activist Clyde Martin (1936 - 2017) staged protests as a student and later worked to integrate Jay's Potato Chips. The regional sales manager for Jay's, he also served as inspector for the Internal Affairs Division of the Cook County, Illinois, Sheriff's Department.

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:

Martin, Clyde, 1936-2017

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Martin, Clyde, 1936-2017 --Interviews

Sales personnel--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

African American businesspeople--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Community Activist

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Clyde Martin, December 10, 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 Clyde Martin, Section A2003_309_001_001, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Clyde Martin was born September 28, 1936 in Bolivar County, Mississippi to Ora Bibbs Martin and Lee Martin. He is the seventh and youngest child.

Martin's parents were farmers who owned land in Bolivar County. In the face of racial discrimination, gospel songs were used by his family and other black

farmers to signal messages to one another while working in the fields. This allowed the families to discuss methods of survival in a racist environment. Martin's other memories of growing up in rural Mississippi include walking five miles to school, Sunday family breakfasts, and going to church. Two of his brothers served in World War II. He remembers watching his parents bury money in ceramic pots because banks were not open to blacks. Martin attended Cleveland Colored Consolidated High School in Cleveland, Mississippi where he worked to get new buses for the school as well as classes that would equip students with skills outside of the agricultural industry.

Sales personnel--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American businesspeople--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Clyde Martin, Section A2003_309_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Clyde Martin talks about his experience at Cleveland Colored Consolidated High School in Cleveland, Mississippi. As a high school student, Martin was asked to send new buses to white schools across the state, but he took the buses to black schools instead. He later worked as a school bus driver and recounts an experience of racial discrimination while driving a school bus and being offered protection by the local sheriff. In high school, Martin also helped to start a program which brought business courses into the school. After graduating from high school, Martin moved to Chicago, Illinois' Woodlawn neighborhood where he soon found work at Jays Foods, the company that makes Jays potato chips. From his beginnings in the sales department, Martin worked his way up the corporate ladder to the position of regional manager. During his career at Jays, Martin worked to integrate the company by creating enough stops on his sales routes to bring in more black employees.

Video Oral History Interview with Clyde Martin, Section A2003_309_001_003, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Clyde Martin reflects on the difference he sees between enfranchised African Americans who help the broader community and those who do not. While working for Jays Foods, Martin began a program that offered summer jobs to young African Americans, enabling them to save money for college. Martin describes his relationship to former mayor of Chicago Richard M. Daley, and the boards he chaired under Mayor Daley including the Urban Renewal Board and the Community Development Commission. In 1978, Martin joined the Cook County Sheriff's Department where he worked part-time until he left Jays Foods, after which he began to work for the department full-time. He talks about his role models and political campaigns. Martin also reflects upon his hopes and concerns for the African American community, his life, and his legacy. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.