

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Bette Catoe

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Catoe, Bette, 1926-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Bette Catoe,
Dates:	June 17, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:03:40).
Abstract:	Pediatrician Dr. Bette Catoe Strudwick (1926 - 2022) helped integrate Washington, D.C., area hospitals, including Providence Hospital, Columbia Hospital, and Washington Hospital Center. Catoe Strudwick was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 17, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_083
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Pediatrician Dr. Bette Catoe Strudwick was born on April 7, 1926, in Washington, D.C. Her mother was a White House pastry chef and government worker and her father was a taxicab owner and driver. Catoe's parents divorced when she was a young child, at which point her mother gained custody and raised her in Washington, D.C. She was educated in Washington, D.C., public schools and received her high school diploma from Dunbar High School in 1944.

Catoe received a full academic scholarship from Howard University, where she earned her B.S. degree in chemistry and physics in 1948. Her career ambition was to become a nurse or lab technician until she received a scholarship to Howard University's Medical School. While a medical school student, she pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and married her husband, Dr. Warren Strudwick. She was one of only seven women in her graduating class when she received her M.D. degree in 1951. In 1956, she began practicing pediatrics in the basement of her home, allowing her to work full time and raise her three children. In 1958, she helped to integrate Washington, D.C. hospitals. She moved her home-based medical practice into a downtown Washington office. By 1971, she had seen thousands of children and continued to provide medical assistance until she retired in 2003. In 1966, Catoe was elected as an at-large member of the Board of Trustees of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia, a post she served in for over thirty years. Ten years later, she was elected as a delegate to the 1976 National Democratic Convention in New York. Catoe also served on and was Chairperson of the D.C. Commission on Judicial Disabilities and Tenure for more than a decade. Catoe was involved in a number of civic organizations, including the AKA Sorority, Jack and Jill of America, the NAACP, the Urban League, The Links, and Carrousels. Catoe and her husband, Dr. Warren Strudwick, had three children; two are physicians and the other is an attorney.

Dr. Bette Catoe Strudwick was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 17, 2004.

Catoe passed away on February 1, 2022, at the age of 95.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Bette Catoe was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on June 17, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Pediatrician Dr. Bette Catoe Strudwick (1926 - 2022) helped integrate Washington, D.C., area hospitals, including Providence Hospital, Columbia Hospital, and Washington Hospital Center.

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:

Catoe, Bette, 1926-

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Catoe, Bette, 1926---Interviews

African American physicians--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Pediatrician

HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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 Dr. Bette Catoe, June 17, 2004. 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 Dr. Bette Catoe, Section A2004_083_001_001, TRT: 0:30:09 ?

Dr. Bette Catoe was born on April 7, 1926 at Columbia Hospital for Women in Washington, D.C. Her mother, Laura Beola Adams, was born in Upper Marlboro, Maryland to Mary Littleton Adams and John Quincy Adams. Catoe's maternal great-grandfather bought his wife's freedom from slavery. Catoe's

mother worked in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's White House administration as a pastry chef. Catoe's father was born in Kershaw, South Carolina. Both his parents died in the flu epidemic of 1918 and he migrated to D.C. to live with his aunt and uncle. He worked as a chauffeur and was the co-owner of a taxi service with two of his brothers. He met Catoe's mother when they were both nineteen years olds. Though the couple divorced six years later, Catoe remained close to her paternal family members. Catoe was raised in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of D.C. where she attended Thomas P. Morgan Elementary School, an all-black demonstration school. She describes her earliest childhood memories and narrates her photographs.

African American families--Washington (D.C.).

African American parents.

Education--Washington (D.C.).

Washington (D.C.)--Social life and customs.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Bette Catoe, Section A2004_083_001_002, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

Dr. Bette Catoe was always tall for her age; she enjoyed reading and aspired to be a doctor like the ones who lived on her block. Church was a large part of her social life as a child. Catoe attended segregated schools in Washington, D.C.--Thomas P. Morgan Elementary School, Garnet-Patterson Junior High School, Banneker Junior High School and Paul Laurence Dunbar High School. During high school, she was marginalized by her peers after one of her paternal uncles was convicted for murder; she was also estranged from her father but was mentored by her mother and junior high principal. Catoe left high school between her junior and senior year to work for the government, earning a salary of \$1,440. At her job, she observed college-educated black women being supervised by less qualified white staff. Catoe returned to Dunbar in the twelfth grade and graduated with her class. After being rejected by the U.S. Army Nurse Corps program at Fordham University, Catoe accepted full scholarship to Howard University in D.C.

Education--Washington (D.C.).

African American neighborhoods--Washington (D.C.).

African American physicians--Washington (D.C.).

Divorce--Washington (D.C.).

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Bette Catoe, Section A2004_083_001_003, TRT: 0:31:12 ?

Dr. Bette Catoe earned her B.S. degree in chemistry and physics from Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1948. She completed her undergraduate requirements in her junior year, and was admitted to Howard University College of Medicine. She pledged the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority during her first year of medical school; and, met her husband, HistoryMaker Dr. Warren Strudwick, Sr., who was also a medical student. Catoe experienced gender discrimination as a female medical student in the 1940s. She graduated from medical school in 1951 and following her residency opened a pediatric practice in her home in 1956. After her mother's death in 1971, Catoe moved the practice into an office building. Later, she and her husband were asked by HistoryMaker Sterling Tucker to participate in the integration of Washington D.C. hospitals, including Providence Hospital, Columbia Hospital for Women and D.C. Children's hospital. HistoryMaker Dr. Lillian M. Beard is one of Catoe's former residents. Catoe retired in 2003.

African American universities and colleges.

Integration.

African American medical students--Washington (D.C.).

Sexism in education--United States.

Hospital administration--Washington (D.C.).

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Bette Catoe, Section A2004_083_001_004, TRT: 0:31:08 ?

Dr. Bette Catoe remembers her former resident, HistoryMaker Dr. Lillian M. Beard. Catoe closed her private practice in 2003. She describes the changes she saw in pediatric care from 1956 to 2003 including changes in parent-child interaction; the introduction of vaccines; and an increase in youth violence. In 1976, Catoe attended the National Democratic Convention in Madison Square Garden as a delegate. She also served as chairman of the board for the District of Columbia General Hospital in Washington, D.C. until its closing by mayor Anthony A. Williams in 2001. Catoe shares her advice to young women interested in careers in medicine; describes her concerns for the African American community—including health disparities between black and white communities; and describes how she would like to be remembered. She reflects upon her legacy and talks about the significance of the preservation of African American history and concludes with the narration of her photographs.

African American physicians--Washington (D.C.).

Patients--Care.

Parent and child.

Democratic National Convention (1976 : New York, N.Y.).