

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Charles Brown

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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>	Brown, Charles, 1936-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Charles Brown,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 31, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:54:10).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Basketball player and basketball official Charles Brown (1936 - 2022) was part of the DuSable Panthers basketball team, which became the first all-black team to reach the finals of the Illinois state high school basketball championship. Brown went on to play in the Amateur Athletic Union on teams in Seattle and Chicago, and after his retirement, became the assignment director of referees for the Chicago Public League, and funded a senior basketball tournament, later known as the Windy City Shootout. Brown was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 31, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_154
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Charles “Sweet Charlie” Brown was born in Canton, Mississippi, on February 24, 1936. Brown's parents, Ruby McClure Brown and Reginald Brown, Sr., moved to Chicago when Brown was still young, and playing basketball in Washington Park became the center of his activity. After attending grade school at Betsey Ross, Brown went on to attend DuSable High School.

In 1954, along with teammates Karl Dennis, Bobby Jackson, Paxton Lumpkin, and Shellie McMillon, Brown was part of the DuSable Panthers basketball team, which became the first all-black team to reach the finals of the Illinois state high school basketball championship. The Panthers finished second that season, with their only loss coming in the final game. Following high school, Brown briefly attended Indiana University before transferring to Seattle University; there, he joined basketball legend Elgin Baylor on the court, and Brown's game winning shot against UCLA in the Elite Eight propelled Seattle to the Final Four in the 1958 NCAA tournament. The following year, Brown was named as an All-American.

Following his graduation from college, Brown played in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) on teams in Seattle and Chicago. Following his retirement from basketball, Brown worked as a community relations executive for the Jewel Grocery Corporation. After retiring from Jewel, he continued to harness his passion for basketball. In 1994, Brown officiated over the Class AA Illinois state championship game, and the assignment director of referees for the Chicago Public League. In 1995, Lettuce Entertain You and Rich Melman began funding a senior basketball tournament, later known as the Windy City Shootout; Brown was the first president of the tournament, which was aimed at players fifty and older from around North America.

"Sweet" Charlie Brown was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 31, 2004.

Brown passed away on August 26, 2022 at the age of 86.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Charles Brown was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 31, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Basketball player and basketball official Charles Brown (1936 - 2022) was part of the DuSable Panthers basketball team, which became the first all-black team to reach the finals of the Illinois state high school basketball championship. Brown went on to play in the Amateur Athletic Union on teams in Seattle and Chicago, and after his retirement, became the assignment director of referees for the Chicago Public League, and funded a senior basketball tournament, later known as the Windy City Shootout.

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## 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®.

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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:

Brown, Charles, 1936-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brown, Charles, 1936---Interviews

African American basketball players--Interviews

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Sports officials--Interviews

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African American athletic directors--Interviews

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Amateur Athletic Union of the United States

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## **Occupations:**

Basketball Player

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Basketball Official

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

SportsMakers

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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 Charles Brown, August 31, 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).

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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 Charles Brown, Section A2004\_154\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

Charles Brown was born on February 24, 1936 in Canton, Mississippi. His mother, Ruby McClure Brown, was born in 1915 in Canton. Her father was a white farmer from Iowa; her mother was African American. Brown's mother attended a training school for teachers. Brown's father, Reginald Brown, Sr., was born in Canton in 1905. Both of Brown's parents were the oldest children in their family. Brown's family moved to Chicago, Illinois because his maternal grandfather was priced off his land when local officials who disapproved of interracial relationships levied taxes. Brown's maternal uncle returned to Mississippi, and was killed in a dispute with the sheriff. In Chicago, Brown's father worked at Inland Steel mill and encouraged his siblings and father to move north. Brown was raised near Washington Park on Chicago's South Side; he spent all day in the park during the summers. He remembers the park's swimming pool where his three brothers were lifeguards, and the park's lagoon where he saw Albert Einstein fishing.

African American basketball players--Interviews.

Sports officials--Interviews.

African American athletic directors--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles Brown, Section A2004\_154\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Charles Brown was raised on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois near Washington Park where he watched the Bud Billiken Parade. He enjoyed going to the movies on Saturdays. At Betsy Ross Elementary School, his favorite subject was biology, and, as a prerequisite for joining the softball team, he got involved in class elections and became a patrol boy in seventh grade. At home, his family emphasized education and would compete to answer newspaper quizzes. Brown was introduced to basketball the summer before he started high school, at the Wabash Avenue YMCA where his older brother played on a team. Brown attended DuSable High School because his older brothers were on the school's swim team. He considered joining the team, too, but gave up the idea when he learned he would not be able to play any other sports. Instead, he tried out for the basketball team. HistoryMaker Margaret Burroughs was one of his teachers at DuSable. He talks about Democratic machine politics in Chicago's African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles Brown, Section A2004\_154\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Charles Brown saw few basketball courts on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois nor many African Americans playing professional sports when he was growing up in the 1940s and 1950s. He looked up to local athletes Nathaniel "Sweetwater" Clifton and Claude Henry K. "Buddy" Young, who eventually had careers in professional leagues. During Brown's junior year at DuSable High School in 1953, his basketball team won the Chicago Public League city championship, but lost to La Grange Lyons Township High School of

LaGrange, Illinois in the state tournament. In 1954, DuSable's team remained undefeated until losing the state championship to Mt. Vernon Township High School. DuSable's coach, Jim Brown, emphasized conditioning in order to build the team's stamina. Charles Brown was known for his shooting ability, and he played the forward position. Brown lists the players on DuSable's 1953 and 1954 teams, and other good teams in the city. He recalls attempting to play football in high school and a college wrestling match.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles Brown, Section A2004\_154\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Charles Brown played on DuSable High School's basketball team during its 1953 and 1954 seasons when it dominated the Chicago Public League. Many DuSable players went on to play division one basketball in college, including Brown. He attended Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana briefly before transferring to Seattle University in Washington where he played with Elgin Baylor. In 1958, Seattle lost the NCAA championship to the University of Kentucky, coached by Adolph Rupp. Brown played in front of crowds, both in high school and college, which were hostile towards black players. After graduating from college, he played in the National Industrial Basketball League for the Buchan Bakers and Amateur Athletic Union basketball for the Chicago Jamaco Saints. Traveling in the South and Midwest, he and other black players experienced discrimination in travel accommodations. Brown talks about basketball player Bob Boozer's career and the final minutes of the 1954 Illinois boys state basketball championship game.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles Brown, Section A2004\_154\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Charles Brown relates the final minutes of the 1954 Illinois boys state basketball championship game. Many say that DuSable High School, the first all-black and first Chicago, Illinois team in the state championship, was cheated out of a victory. A knee injury in college threatened Brown's basketball prospects, but he continued playing; after having surgery on it years later, he returned to basketball after intense physical therapy. Brown worked as a youth counselor in the detached workers program of YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, then as a community relations executive for Jewel Grocery. In 1987, Brown helped organize a rematch between DuSable's 1954 basketball team and one of their city rivals. He also organized a small team to play in adult tournaments. Out of a desire to create an over-fifty basketball league in Chicago, Brown formed eight teams with sponsorship from Fred Rosen and Rich Melman, the founder of Lettuce Entertain You. At the time of the interview, Brown also officiated youth basketball.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles Brown, Section A2004\_154\_001\_006, TRT: 0:23:20 ?

Charles Brown began organizing the Windy City Shootout, a basketball league for those over fifty years old, in 1987. The league hosted its first tournament in 1990 and began league play in 1995. Since then, the tournament has grown to include teams from cities across the country. The Windy City Senior Basketball League's players vary widely in abilities, so the league remains competitive by using a system that balances the skill level on each team and requires that every team member be allotted ten minutes play per game. Brown shares his view that the U.S. Men's Basketball Team's disappointing finish at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece reveals how profit usurps devotion to one's team in contemporary basketball culture. Brown talks about his three children and one grandchild. He reflects upon his life, legacy, hopes and concerns for the African American community and how he would like to be remembered.