

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Katherine Bennett

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bennett, Katherine, 1922-2009
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Katherine Bennett,
Dates:	October 13, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:14:01).
Abstract:	Academic administrator and college basketball coach Katherine Bennett (1922 - 2009) was a pioneer in women's athletics, coaching the first competitive women's basketball game, integrating women's athletics into the CIAA and becoming the first female chair of the department. She was recognized by the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame for her accomplishments in women's sports. Bennett was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 13, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_200
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Women's sports pioneer and educator Katherine Howard Bennett was born on October 17, 1922 in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. She was raised by a single mother who worked as a sorter and mender in a laundry. In 1940, Bennett earned her high school diploma from P.W. Moore High School, where she was a member of the debate team, band and drama club.

From 1940 until 1944, Bennett attended North Carolina A & T University where she encountered her first female athlete. Intrigued by the world of sports she immersed herself in athletics. Bennett, along with twins Mable and Inez Scott, were A & T's first majorette team. She was also a member of the drama club, band, debate team, volleyball, tennis and gymnastics teams. Bennett also joined the Women's Athletic Association and participated in "National Sports Day," a weekend of sports for black, female college students. In 1944, Bennett earned her B.S. degree in English and health & physical education. She later returned to school, receiving her master's degree in health education in 1947 from New York University and earning her doctorate in 1977 in physical education from Virginia Polytechnic University.

After earning her B.A. degree, Bennett taught physical education at Rosenwald School in South Mills, North Carolina. From 1947 until 1953, she worked as a health and physical education professor at Hampton Institute. In addition to teaching, Bennett also coordinated the women's athletics program. In 1953, her husband was hired as the head football coach at Virginia State University; she followed him and began working as a professor of health and physical education. That same year Bennett created and established the Officiating Board and Women's Officials at VSU. In the late 1950s, Bennett created guidelines that would ultimately lead to incorporating women's athletics into the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association or CIAA. In 1968, Bennett coached the first competitive women's basketball team at VSU, and in 1975 she directed the first CIAA women's basketball

tournament at Virginia State. In 1977, Bennett was appointed chairperson of the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at VSU, the first woman to hold this post. That same year, Bennett became the first coordinator for women's sports at Virginia State. In 1989 she was inducted in the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame. Bennett retired from Virginia State in 1992.

Bennett passed away on December 20, 2009 at age 87.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Katherine Bennett was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on October 13, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and college basketball coach Katherine Bennett (1922 - 2009) was a pioneer in women's athletics, coaching the first competitive women's basketball game, integrating women's athletics into the CIAA and becoming the first female chair of the department. She was recognized by the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame for her accomplishments in women's sports.

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:

Bennett, Katherine, 1922-2009

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Bennett, Katherine, 1922-2009--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Virginia State University

Occupations:

College Basketball Coach

HistoryMakers® Category:

SportsMakers

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 Katherine Bennett, October 13, 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 Katherine Bennett, Section A2004_200_001_001, TRT: 0:31:20
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Katherine Bennett was born on October 17, 1922 in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. She never knew her father. Bennett's mother, Annie Howard, worked as a separator in a laundry before moving to New York for a better paying job. During that time, Bennett and her epileptic cousin were raised by her strict grandmother, also named Annie Howard, who was believed in the neighborhood to have healing hands for burns. Bennett's mother sent Bennett fashionable new clothes from New York and bought her a bicycle, something no other girl in the neighborhood had. Bennett's family attended St. Stephen Missionary Baptist Church in Elizabeth City, where she played the piano. Bennett was the valedictorian at Banks Street Elementary School. She attended P.W. Moore High School while also working a job sponsored by the National Youth Administration. Surprising some in her community, Bennett chose to attend college, and matriculated at Negro Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina, where she joined the majorette squad.

Video Oral History Interview with Katherine Bennett, Section A2004_200_001_002, TRT: 0:31:17
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Katherine Bennett was active in the majorettes and band during her college years at the Negro Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina in Greensboro. She also played three sports through the Women's Athletic Association because the college did not offer varsity sports for women. Bennett taught for a year in Sawmills, North Carolina before obtaining her master's degree at New York University. While in New York City, she met her husband, HistoryMaker William Maurice Bennett, whom she at first disliked. In 1947, Bennett was hired as a professor in the physical education department at Hampton Institute in Virginia, then joined the physical education department at Virginia State College in Petersburg in 1953. She worked as a referee, mostly at girls' high school games, and became the first black female president of the Virginia State Association of Health and Physical Education. Bennett worked aggressively for the implementation of Title IX to ensure equal funding for women's teams at Virginia State.

Video Oral History Interview with Katherine Bennett, Section A2004_200_001_003, TRT: 0:29:46
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Katherine Bennett, early in her career, was active in the National Sports Day Association, which organized intramural competitions for African American female college students. Virginia State College began programs for women in tennis, volleyball and basketball, which became most popular. Bennett witnessed the growing popularity of women's sports throughout the 1960s. The enactment of Title IX in 1972 mandated that women's sports receive equal funding, and Bennett defended this policy to defiant male coaches within the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association. In 1977, she received her Ed.D. from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, and then was named chairwoman of the department of health and physical education at Virginia State. Bennett directed cotillions for twenty-five years with the Beaux-Twenty club. She approves of the growing popularity of professional sports, but believes athletes should get an education first.

Video Oral History Interview with Katherine Bennett, Section A2004_200_001_004, TRT: 0:19:15

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Katherine Bennett was appointed as the women's basketball coach at Virginia State College in Petersburg, Virginia when the college created a varsity program, despite her lack of experience playing basketball. During her tenure, both she and her husband, HistoryMaker William Maurice Bennett, were varsity coaches at the college. She was honored with induction into the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association Hall of Fame in 1987, and the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame in 1989. Bennett was a majorette at the Negro Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina in Greensboro, North Carolina, and then took over Virginia State's majorette squad as its sponsor, working with F. Nathaniel Gatlin, longtime professor of music. She reflects upon her life, the importance of history and on the progress that women's sports has seen over the years. Bennett describes her concerns for the African American community as well as how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Katherine Bennett, Section A2004_200_001_005, TRT: 0:22:23

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Katherine Bennett narrates her photographs.