

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Renaldo M. Jensen

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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>	Jensen, Renaldo M.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Renaldo M. Jensen,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 8, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:05:10).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Aerospace engineer and military officer Renaldo M. Jensen (1940 - ) was one of the first two African Americans to earn their M.S. degrees in aerospace engineering from the United States Air Force School of Technology at Dayton's Wright Patterson Air Force Base. During the course of his career, Jensen worked with the United States Air Force, Howard University, the Pentagon, and Ford Motor Company. Jensen was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 8, 2005, in Dearborn, Michigan. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_101
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Aerospace engineer and military officer Renaldo Mario Jensen was born on June 6, 1934, in New York, New York. His parents, Octave and Doris Davis Jensen, had roots in St. Croix and Antigua, respectively. Jensen attended St. Charles Borromeo School and graduated from Harlem's Bishop Dubois High School in 1952. He served in the Reserve Officer Training Corps at North Carolina A&T State University, then transferred to Howard University where he graduated in 1958 with his B.S. degree in mechanical engineering. After enlisting in the United States Air Force, Jensen and Horace Russell became the first two African Americans to earn their M.S. degrees in aerospace engineering from the United States Air Force School of Technology at Dayton's Wright Patterson Air Force Base in 1966. In 1970, Jensen received his Ph.D. degree in aerospace engineering, specializing in supersonic combustion, from Purdue University.

While serving for twenty years as an officer in the United States Air Force, Jensen was stationed in Florida, Colorado, and Germany; he also worked on the Minuteman missile crew at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana. Jensen, a combat crew commander, participated in the first successful launch of a dual mode intercontinental ballistic missile from Vandenberg Air Force Base. He joined the faculty of the Air Force School of Technology at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in 1967 and taught at the school until 1974. In 1978, Jensen resigned from the Air Force as a lieutenant colonel having received the Missile Combat Crew Award and the Air Force Commendation Medal. Jensen taught at Howard University and worked at the Pentagon before joining Ford Motor Company as an aerodynamics engineer. He became the director of minority supplier development in 1987, and in 2004, he awarded \$3.7 billion of the \$90 billion in Ford supply contracts to 309 minority suppliers.

Jensen is a member of the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce, the American Society for Mechanical Engineers, the American Institute for Aeronautics and Astronautics, the National Minority Business Development

Council, the Combustion Institute, the Military Operations Research Society, and the Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honor Society. Also a member of the Minority Suppliers Hall of Fame, Jensen lives in Farmington Hills, Michigan with his wife Alicia, with whom he raised two children.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Renaldo M. Jensen was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 8, 2005, in Dearborn, Michigan, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes.

Aerospace engineer and military officer Renaldo M. Jensen (1940 - ) was one of the first two African Americans to earn their M.S. degrees in aerospace engineering from the United States Air Force School of Technology at Dayton's Wright Patterson Air Force Base. During the course of his career, Jensen worked with the United States Air Force, Howard University, the Pentagon, and Ford Motor Company.

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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:

Jensen, Renaldo M.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jensen, Renaldo M.--Interviews

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Aerospace engineers--Interviews

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African American scientists--Interviews

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Minorities in technology--Interviews

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African American college teachers--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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Ford Motor Company

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United States. Air Force.

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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MilitaryMakers

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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 Renaldo M. Jensen, April 8, 2005. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 10/4/2011 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, April 8, 2005**

Video Oral History Interview with Renaldo M. Jensen, Section A2005\_101\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:10 2005/04/08

Renaldo Jensen was born on June 29, 1940 in New York, New York. His mother, Doris Davis Jensen, was born in 1906 in Antigua, British West Indies and immigrated to the United States as a teenager to care for an ailing aunt. Jensen's father, Octav Jensen, was born in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. Octav came to the United States as a soccer player and was later drafted to the U.S. Army, before opening an electronics repair shop in New York City. Jensen and his sister were raised by their mother and attended Bishop Dubois Catholic School. As a high school student, Jensen ran track. After graduating from high school, he attended North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro, North Carolina for the ROTC program. While there, he majored in general sciences. In his sophomore year, he decided to transfer to Howard University and study engineering.

African American families--New York (State)--New York.

African Americans--New York(State)--New York--Social life and customs.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--New York (State)--New York.

Catholic Church--Education (Secondary)--United States.

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.

Howard University--Students.

Video Oral History Interview with Renaldo M. Jensen, Section A2005\_101\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:30 2005/04/08

Renaldo Jensen his transfer as an undergraduate from North Carolina A&T State University to Howard University to study engineering. Upon graduation from Howard, Jensen joined the United States Air Force as a Second Lieutenant and civil engineer. Jensen was stationed at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana as a part of the Minuteman missile wing combat crew from 1962 to 1967. During this time, he completed an aerospace engineering master's program at the Air Force Institute of Technology. Jensen later became a research and development officer in the propulsion laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and taught rocket propulsion at the Air Force Institute. Jensen attended Purdue University in 1967 and earned his Ph. D. degree in aerospace engineering, with a specialization in supersonic combustion, in 1970. He taught at the Air Force Institute of Technology for four years, and later joined the studies and analysis staff at the Pentagon. In 1978, Jensen decided to retire from the Air Force.

African American military officers.

African American engineers.

Engineering--Study and teaching--United States.

Air Force Institute of Technology (U.S.).  
Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (Ohio).  
Purdue University.  
Minuteman (Missile)--History--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Renaldo M. Jensen, Section A2005\_101\_001\_003, TRT:  
0:28:30 2005/04/08

Renaldo Jensen discusses having a Ph.D. degree in engineering while in the aerospace laboratory and testing the impact of sensations on living beings. While working for the Pentagon, Jensen taught as an adjunct professor in engineering at Howard University. In 1978, Jensen took a group of students to a job fair where he was also recruited by Ford Motor Company to head up Ford's Aerodynamics Design Center. Later, Jensen moved to advanced engineering where he worked for ten years observing various phenomena that affect the technical and commercial aspects of vehicle construction. Jensen eventually accepted the position of Director of Supplier Diversity at Ford Motor Company, which made him responsible for providing support and resources to minority suppliers.

Diversity in the workplace--United States.  
Ford Motor Company--Employees.  
Howard University--Faculty.  
Engineering--Study and Teaching--United States.  
Pentagon.

Video Oral History Interview with Renaldo M. Jensen, Section A2005\_101\_001\_004, TRT:  
0:28:50 2005/04/08

Renaldo Jensen discusses his life and opportunities. Jensen is proud of being the first African American faculty member at the Air Force Institute of Technology, and mentions teaching Guion Bluford, the first African American astronaut. Jensen talks about the difficulties for minorities in corporate America, and states that Ford Motor Company has been very successful in its diversity initiatives. Jensen has won every award given to individuals by the Minority Supplier Development Council and was recently inducted into their Hall of Fame. Jensen discusses his concerns for the African American community and the lack of innovation and ability to evolve that he believes characterizes many black businesses. Jensen wants his legacy to be that he showed people that they can be effective while being creditable and honest. Jensen talks about his family, his two children and his wife.

Air Force Institute of Technology (U.S.)--faculty.  
African American business enterprises.  
Minorities--Employment.  
Minorities in technology.

Video Oral History Interview with Renaldo M. Jensen, Section A2005\_101\_001\_005, TRT:  
0:09:10 2005/04/08

Renaldo Jensen discusses his love of motorcycles and what he has learned while working with the public. Jensen says that he has learned the fickle nature of the public and that in his position, he has perceived power that he does not abuse. Jensen talks about the responsibilities that accompany positions of power, and the tendency of many executives to abuse positions of authority. Jensen discusses his legacy and the way in which he wants to be remembered. He states that he wants to be remembered as someone who made a difference and put others before himself. He states that the reward of what he does is in

the way he is able to affect those around him.  
Management--Vocational guidance.