

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ronald Glass

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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>	Glass, Ron, 1945-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ronald Glass,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 27, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:54:46).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Stage actor and television actor Ronald Glass (1945 - 2016 ) appeared in numerous television shows, including All in the Family, Maude, Hawaii Five-O, Good Times, Friends, Star Trek Voyager, and Firefly. Glass was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 27, 2005, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_111
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Actor Ron Glass was born Ronald Earle Glass to Lefia Mae Gibson Glass and Crump Allen Glass on July 10, 1945, in Evansville, Indiana. A spelling bee champion at St. John's Elementary School, Glass attended St. Francis High School where he excelled at athletics and singing. After graduating in 1964, Glass attended the University of Evansville where he received his B.A. degree in drama and literature.

In 1968, Glass made his stage debut at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis,

Minnesota. Moving to Hollywood in 1972, Glass got his first television role in an episode of *Sanford and Son*. Other roles followed in *All in the Family* (1972); *Maude* (1972); *Hawaii Five-O* (1973); *Good Times* (1974); *When Things Were Rotten* (1975); and *Streets of San Francisco* (1976). In 1975, Glass became a regular on the police comedy *Barney Miller*; he later went on to play Felix in *The New Odd Couple* (1983). Glass appeared in series as varied as *The Twilight Zone* (1985); *227* (1985); *Deep Space* (1987); *Family Matters* (1989); *Murder She Wrote* (1984); *Friends* (1994); *Star Trek Voyager* (1995); *Teen Angel* (1997); and *The Practice* (1997). In 2002, Glass played the role of Shepherd Book in *Firefly*, which he reprised for *Serenity*, the 2005 movie based on the show.

Active in the community, Glass served on the boards of the American Repertory Dance Company, the Ka-Ron Lehman Dancers, and St. Thomas University. Glass was also the chairman of the Al Wooten, Jr. Heritage Center in Los Angeles, California.

Glass passed away on November 25, 2016.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ronald Glass was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 27, 2005, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Stage actor and television actor Ronald Glass (1945 - 2016 ) appeared in numerous television shows, including *All in the Family*, *Maude*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *Good Times*, *Friends*, *Star Trek Voyager*, and *Firefly*.

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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:

Glass, Ron, 1945-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Glass, Ron, 1945---Interviews

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African American actors--Interviews

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African American television personalities--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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## Occupations:

Stage Actor

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Television Actor

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers|EntertainmentMakers

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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 Ronald Glass, April 27, 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 2/5/2020 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 Ronald Glass, Section  
A2005\_111\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:13 2005/04/27

Ronald Glass was born on July 10, 1945, in Evansville, Indiana, to Lethia Gibson Glass and Crump Glass. Glass' mother was born in 1913. Her family was originally from Sardis, Mississippi, although her parents had settled in Memphis, Tennessee. She lost her mother at a young age, and was unable to complete high school when her father refused to pay for her books. Glass' father was also born in 1913 and raised in Memphis. Although the Glasses were very proud of their self-worth, they were secretive about their family's past in Mississippi. After his parents separated, Glass' mother worked as a domestic to raise five children in Evansville. His father moved back to Memphis, where he started another family and worked at the AC Humko factory. Glass spent summers with his paternal aunts in Memphis, and only saw his father occasionally. He recalls learning about race relations while visiting his maternal aunt in Memphis, and from his paternal aunts' fury over his sister and him riding in the front of a bus.

African American actors--Interviews.

African American television personalities--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald Glass, Section  
A2005\_111\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:15 2005/04/27

Ronald Glass and his siblings were raised in Evansville, Indiana. His parents moved there from Memphis, Tennessee for better opportunities. After Glass' parents separated, his mother raised the family by working as domestic help. While growing up in poorly maintained federal housing projects, Glass often heard the sound of music, and smelled cooking, the nearby packing company, and the dirt by the creek while playing mumble-peg with

his friends. His mother insisted on a superior Catholic school education for her children. In kindergarten, Glass rode the bus to the all-black St. John the Baptist Elementary School in Newburgh, Indiana. Following school integration, he entered St. Anthony Catholic School in Evansville. A top student, Glass enjoyed competing at school. An enthusiastic seventh grade English teacher taught Glass about diagraming sentences, and he excelled at the spelling bee. Glass inherited his world view from his mother. He recalls his mother's face as an important memory of his childhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald Glass, Section  
A2005\_111\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:17 2005/04/27

Ronald Glass attended St. Anthony Catholic School in Evansville, Indiana, where he excelled academically. His favorite teacher was his fourth and fifth grade teacher, Sister Joseph Ann, whom he was reunited with years later at a basketball game in Indianapolis. Although Glass was proud of his academic and athletic achievements in his predominantly white school environment, he was teased for his propriety by his neighborhood peers. He was also teased about his lisp as a boy and his complexion. As the youngest in his family, and with a large age difference separating him from his siblings, Glass grew up as somewhat of a loner. Attending St. Anthony Catholic Church also made him unusual in his mostly Baptist community. He recalls feeling like an outsider, but standing up for himself when confronted with bullies. Glass was introduced to classical music by his German tutor, and enjoyed this genre over rock and roll.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald Glass, Section  
A2005\_111\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:43 2005/04/27

Ronald Glass attended St. Francis High School in Evansville, Indiana, where he excelled in his academics and in athletics. After graduating in 1963, he enrolled at Evansville College, where he had his first opportunity to act on stage in a production of the Barrie Stavis play, 'Banners of Steel.' His appearance earned him an award as the cast member that contributed the most to the production, and Glass went on to set a record at his college after receiving two more of those awards. Glass

received his B.A. degree in drama and literature in 1968. The same year, he made his stage debut at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he appeared in several productions over a span of four years. In 1972, Glass moved to Los Angeles, California, and landed his first television role in an episode of 'Sanford and Son.' Other roles followed in sitcoms such as 'All in the Family.' In 1975, Glass became a regular cast member on the police comedy 'Barney Miller,' as Detective Ron Harris.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald Glass, Section  
A2005\_111\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:23 2005/04/27

Ronald Glass focused on his studies at Evansville College in Indiana. Although he was initially invited to join a black fraternity that was being formed on campus, he declined. He was exempt from the Vietnam War draft on account of a health condition at the time. Although exposed to the Civil Rights Movement, he prefers to keep his political views private. Glass appeared regularly on the police comedy 'Barney Miller' from 1975 until the show's conclusion in 1982. Some of his favorite scenes from the show included HistoryMakers Janet Angel MacLachlan and Roscoe Lee Brown. While playing Detective Ron Harris, Glass was able to fulfill his goals of entertaining as well as teaching. He considers the character of Harris to be a role model for young black men. Glass played the role of Felix in 'The New Odd Couple' for eighteen episodes in 1983. In 1996, he was cast as a history teacher named Ronald Fletcher in the NBC sitcom 'Mr. Rhodes.' Glass reflects upon his family's happiness at his success.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald Glass, Section  
A2005\_111\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:55 2005/04/27

Ronald Glass, as an active member of the community in Los Angeles, California, served on the boards of the American Repertory Dance Company, the Ka-Ron Lehman Dancers, and St. Thomas University in Miami Gardens, Florida. Glass also served as the chairman of the Al Wooten, Jr. Heritage Center in Los Angeles. He appeared as the character Shepherd Book on the science-fiction TV show 'Firefly' and on the 2005 film, 'Serenity.' Glass explains why he wants to continue pursuing projects

as an actor, but has little interest in producing or directing. While talking about his family, Glass notes his close relationship with his sister and only living sibling, Geraldine Glass, and her five children. Glass reflects upon his life and work. He considers his performance as Detective Ron Harris on the 'Barney Miller' show to be his career's legacy. Glass describes his hopes for the African American community and how he wants to be remembered for living his life with sincerity and humor.