

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Larry Brown

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Brown, Larry, 1947-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Larry Brown,
Dates:	August 10, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:48:55).
Abstract:	Auto sales entrepreneur Larry Brown (1947 -) is president of Ottawa Ford-Lincoln-Mercury and Kia in Ottawa, Illinois. He is also one of the first two African Americans to serve on the National Automobile Dealers Association's board of directors. Brown was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 10, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_193
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Larry Thomas Brown, president of Ottawa Ford-Lincoln-Mercury and Kia of Ottawa, Illinois, and former owner of Star Toyota in Merrillville, Indiana and Landmark Ford in Niles, Illinois, is one of the first of two African Americans to serve on the National Automobile Dealers Association's board of directors. Brown was born in Inkster, Michigan on April 21, 1947 to Mattie Lewis Brown and Nander Brown, a mechanic and preacher. Early in Brown's life, the family moved to Detroit, Michigan where Brown began his education in the public school system.

After graduating from Western High School in Detroit, Brown served as sergeant in the United States Air Force from 1965 to 1969. He then returned to Michigan where he attended Wayne County Community College in Detroit while working at Ford Motor Company. In August of 1971, he married Angelina Caldwell Brown. He continued his education during the first years of his marriage, receiving his B.S. degree from Wayne State University in Detroit in 1973. Brown earned his M.A. degree in management and supervision from Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan in 1979 and also graduated from the Ford Motor Company Dealer Training Program. He left Ford Motor Company to start his own dealership in 1985.

In addition to serving on the National Automobile Dealers Association's board of directors, Brown served as chairman of its Dealership Operations and Industry Relations Committees and the Executive Board and Public Affairs Committees. Brown also served Ford-Lincoln-Mercury Minority Dealers Association as president, chairman, vice president of Ford Division, vice president of Customer Service Division and as treasurer. He is past president and chairman of National Association of Minority Automobile Dealerships and remains a board member.

Brown's awards and honors include Operation PUSH's Crystal Spirit Award, the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealership's Jesse Jones Vision Award, *Dollars and Sense* magazine's America's Best and Brightest Award, and America's Outstanding Dealer Award. He was inducted into Western High School's Hall of Fame in

1994.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Larry Brown was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 10, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Auto sales entrepreneur Larry Brown (1947 -) is president of Ottawa Ford-Lincoln-Mercury and Kia in Ottawa, Illinois. He is also one of the first two African Americans to serve on the National Automobile Dealers Association's board of directors.

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:

Brown, Larry, 1947-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brown, Larry, 1947- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Auto Sales Entrepreneur

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 Larry Brown, August 10, 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 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 Larry Brown, Section A2005_193_001_001, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Larry Brown was born on April 21, 1947 in Inkster, Michigan to Mattie Lewis Brown and Nander Brown. His mother was born in 1916 in Eastman, Georgia to Itone Touchstone and Henry Lewis. When she was a baby, her family moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where, because of her mother's medical issues, she was primarily raised by an aunt. She married Brown's father at the age of sixteen or

seventeen. Brown's father was born around 1904 in Greensboro, Alabama and worked in manufacturing at the Budd Company. Brown grew up in Detroit, Michigan with twelve siblings. With his father as the sole breadwinner, the family had little money, and Brown remembers receiving gifts from the Old Newsboys' Goodfellow Fund of Detroit at Christmas. He lived near Briggs Stadium, where the Detroit Tigers and the Detroit Lions played. Brown started a paper route when he was twelve years old, and was happy to have money of his own. Brown attended Chaney Elementary School, Condon Junior High School, and Western High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Larry Brown, Section A2005_193_001_002, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Larry Brown maintained perfect attendance throughout his school years in Detroit, Michigan. He remembers admiring his counselor at Chaney Elementary School and his shop teacher at Condon Junior High School. Although his father was a minister who had his own church, Brown often used his Sunday paper route as an excuse to skip services. He recalls his mother's cooking and the city-wide celebration every Thanksgiving. Brown was overweight until his junior year of high school, when the newspaper he delivered went on strike. Without the money from his paper route, he stopped buying junk food. At Western High School, he played football, baseball and track. After he graduated in 1965, Brown joined the U.S. Air Force and was stationed at the Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Navy Base during the Vietnam War. He was discharged in 1969 and attended Wayne County Community College for a year before transferring to Wayne State University. Brown worked a part-time job at the Ford Motor Company to help pay for his education.

Video Oral History Interview with Larry Brown, Section A2005_193_001_003, TRT: 0:28:10 ?

Larry Brown studied journalism at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan while working part time for the Ford Motor Company. After he married Angelina Caldwell Brown in 1971, he accepted a full-time job as a system analyst at Ford. He graduated from Wayne State in 1973 and earned his master's degree at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant in 1976. He then relocated to Chicago, Illinois for his promotion to Chicago south market manager. Brown was accepted to the Ford Minority Dealer Training Program in 1983, where he was mentored by HistoryMaker Mel Farr, Sr. In 1985, he opened his first dealership in Ottawa, Illinois, an area with very few minorities. Upon learning that an African American had bought the dealership, the white managers at the Ottawa dealership quit. Nonetheless, Brown ran a successful business, and later opened two more dealerships in 1991 and 2001. He served as a board member and president of the Ford-Lincoln-Mercury Minority Dealers Association.

Video Oral History Interview with Larry Brown, Section A2005_193_001_004, TRT: 0:21:05 ?

Larry Brown joined the National Association of Minority Auto Dealers (NAMAD) in 1990, ten years after it was founded by William Shack and HistoryMakers Mel Farr, Sr. and Nathan Conyers. Brown was also elected as the first minority director on the board of the National Automotive Dealers Association (NADA). He names Edward Davis and the founders of NAMAD as his greatest role models in the industry, and offers advice to aspiring automobile dealers. Brown highlights the importance of education and reflects upon the progress made by black automobile dealers in the industry. He describes his legacy, which includes his financial contribution to the NADA Charitable Foundation. Brown voices his concern for black homeowners being pushed out of their neighborhoods by high property taxes. At the time of the interview, Brown was running for vice chairman of NADA, which would make him the

first African American in that position. He concludes the interview by describing his family and how he would like to be remembered.