

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Monica Pearson

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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>	Kaufman, Monica
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Monica Pearson,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 21, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:06:01).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Television anchor Monica Pearson (1947 - ) began her career as the first African American and the first woman to anchor a daily evening newscast in Atlanta at WSB-TV in 1975. She has won numerous awards for her journalism and documentary work. Pearson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 21, 2006, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_030
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Monica Pearson has led a distinguished career in journalism at WSB-TV in Atlanta, Georgia, as the anchor of *Channel 2 Action News* at five, six and eleven o'clock. Pearson has received over twenty-eight Emmy Awards as well as other awards for her reporting and her "Closeups" segments. She is also a humanitarian who assists in charitable, non-profit, and community causes.

Born on October 20, 1947, in Louisville, Kentucky, Pearson is the daughter of Hattie Wallace Jones Edmondson and the late Maurice Jones. Like her mother,

Pearson attended Catholic schools during her formative and high school years. Her mother, who worked her way through school, attended St. Mary's Academy in New Orleans, Louisiana, a prestigious boarding school for black females. Her mother was also one of the first black women to work at the Louisville Post Office.

Pearson knew at an early age that she would pursue a career in communications. One of her part time jobs in high school included working at the local black owned radio station where she did voice over work and read prayers on the station's religious programs. She also sang country music as a teenager on a television show called *Hayloft Hoedown*. Pearson pursued and obtained her B.S. degree in English from the University of Louisville. She also participated in the Summer Program for Minority Groups at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University in New York City. Before joining WSB-TV Channel 2, Pearson worked in public relations for Brown Forman Distiller; as an anchor and reporter for WHAS-TV in Louisville, Kentucky; and as a reporter for the *Louisville Times*. Pearson began her career as the first African American and the first female to anchor a daily evening newscast in Atlanta at WSB-TV in 1975.

Pearson is a recipient of numerous awards: the Women's Sports Journalism Award, Citizen Broadcaster of the Year Award, Broadcaster of the Year Award, Women of Achievement Award, and the Southern Regional Emmy Awards. She also won first place for excellence in journalism/documentary from the Atlanta Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists for her documentary, *Hot Flash: The Truth About Menopause*.

Pearson is a mother and resides in Atlanta with her mother and husband.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Monica Pearson was conducted by Evelyn Pounds on February 21, 2006, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Television anchor Monica Pearson (1947 - ) began her career as the first African American and the first woman to anchor a daily evening newscast in Atlanta at WSB-TV in 1975. She has won numerous awards for her journalism and documentary work.

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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:**

Kaufman, Monica

Pounds, Evelyn (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Kaufman, Monica--Interviews

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African American television journalists--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

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Women television journalists--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

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Television news anchors--Georgia--Atlanta--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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WSB-TV (Television station : Atlanta, Ga.)

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## **Occupations:**

Television Anchor

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

MediaMakers

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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 Monica Pearson, February 21, 2006. 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 Monica Pearson, Section  
A2006\_030\_001\_001, TRT: 0:27:40 2006/02/21

Monica Pearson was born on October 20, 1947 in Louisville, Kentucky to Hattie Wallace Edmondson and Maurice Jones. Pearson traced her mother's ancestry to the Bamileke people in the Republic of Cameroon, Africa through genetic testing. Pearson's maternal great grandparents, Nettie Langford and Bob Langford, were pig farmers in Pewee Valley, Kentucky. Raised in Louisville's Smoketown neighborhood by her single mother, Rosie Langford, Pearson's mother graduated from St. Mary's Academy in New Orleans, Louisiana and worked at the post office during World War II. Pearson's parents married after her father returned from U.S. military service, and they lived above Abramson's Market where her father worked. After Pearson's parents divorced, her father remarried and moved to Indiana. Pearson was close to her paternal aunt, Corine Jones Claypool, and she remembers buying produce at the farmer's market with her mother. Growing up, Pearson's strict mother emphasized education, while her

grandmother taught her cards.

African American television journalists--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Women television journalists--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Television news anchors--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Monica Pearson, Section  
A2006\_030\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:20 2006/02/21

Monica Pearson's mother worked while attending St. Mary's Academy, an all-girl boarding high school in New Orleans, Louisiana, where she graduated in 1944. When Pearson's parents divorced, she and her mother moved to Louisville, Kentucky to live with her Cousin Lee, who had fair skin and teased her about her brown complexion. Cousin Lee was the driver for the president of Ashland Refining Company. Although Pearson hoped to buy her family's home when her cousin relocated to Indiana, he sold it to someone else. Pearson attended St. Peter Claver School before transferring to St. William School, a predominately African American all-girl Catholic school taught by white nuns in Louisville. She describes the similarities she shares with her father; her parents' wedding; her family's holiday celebrations; and visiting her mother's high school. Pearson also remembers the smell of homemade baked rolls; her childhood friend, Janice Rucker; and the sound of saw machines at Hillerich & Bradsby Company in Louisville.

Video Oral History Interview with Monica Pearson, Section  
A2006\_030\_001\_003, TRT: 0:25:21 2006/02/21

Monica Pearson attended St. Peter Claver Church and St. William School, private Catholic schools in Louisville, Kentucky. Pearson and her mother shopped at Byck's, Selman's and Kaufmann's department stores in Louisville. At Presentation Academy, Pearson was a cheerleader and belonged to the debate team, the newspaper staff, and the chorus. Her mother, who converted to Catholicism when she married Pearson's father, named Pearson after her cousins and her mother, Rosie Langford. As a teenager, Pearson taught classes at the YMCA and served as a summer social worker trainee and a candy striper at

Louisville General Hospital. In her free time, she sang on the country music show 'Hayloft Hoedown,' worked at WLOU-radio, which was owned by Robert Rounsaville, and wrote articles for the Louisville Defender. When Pearson competed in a beauty contest against her mother's wishes, she placed third and won Miss Congeniality. She attended the University of Louisville, where she served as an Upward Bound tutor.

Video Oral History Interview with Monica Pearson, Section  
A2006\_030\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:30 2006/02/21

Monica Pearson pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority at the University of Louisville in Kentucky. Among her professors was Whitney Young's sister, Eleanor Young Love. Pearson recalls Louisville's black-owned Lyric Theatre and Rialto Theatre; NAACP President Lyman T. Johnson and pastor Alfred Daniel Williams King; and the assassinations of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Pearson studied English and philosophy and aspired at first to become a teacher, but dropped out to work as a bank teller at Louisville's Liberty National Bank and Trust. She obtained a position as a reporter at the Louisiana Times, then at WHAS-TV, where she became the first African American anchor in Louisville, and then the first African American woman to anchor evening news in Atlanta, Georgia when she transferred to WSB-TV. Pearson describes her volunteer activities. She also reflects upon the strength of her mother and grandmother, and her family's experiences of racial discrimination in Atlanta.

Video Oral History Interview with Monica Pearson, Section  
A2006\_030\_001\_005, TRT: 0:16:10 2006/02/21

Monica Pearson reflects upon her strained relationship with her father, Maurice Jones, and expresses her regret that she knows little about his family history. Pearson urges aspiring reporters to become news directors, general managers, and television station owners. She reflects upon her legacy and life, including her marriages and divorces, her relationship with her husband, John E. Pearson, Sr. and her Catholic faith.