

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Alyce Jenkins

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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>	Jenkins, Alyce Earl
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Alyce Jenkins,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 19, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:16:47).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Rehabilitation specialist and military officer Alyce Jenkins (1935 - ) was the first African American female Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy Reserve (USNR). Jenkins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 19, 2006, in Yellow Springs, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_042
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Rehabilitation counselor, educator, and first African American female to be appointed in 1974 to the rank of Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy Reserve (USNR) without prior service, Alyce Earl Jenkins was born on September 22, 1935 in Birmingham, Alabama. The daughter of Margaret LaVern Wright Earl and Boysie Orr, Jenkins was raised by her mother and stepfather, Arthur Fred Earl. She attended Lincoln Elementary School and graduated from A.H. Parker High School in 1953. She majored in graphic arts at Alabama A&M College in Huntsville, Alabama where she graduated with a B.S. degree in mechanics arts in 1957. She earned a M.Ed. in rehabilitation counseling from Kent State University

in 1968.

In 1958, Jenkins was hired as assistant director of printing and graphics for Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio where the *Journal of Human Relations* was printed. In 1966, the Central State University's Printing Department closed, and Jenkins worked for the Ohio Bureau of Rehabilitation Counseling. From 1968 to 1972, Jenkins was Director of Counseling for Wilberforce University. From 1972 to 1993, she taught rehabilitation counseling at Wright State University in Dayton.

Published widely in professional journals, Jenkins's writings, professional presentations, and federal funding awards focused on African Americans with disabilities, a group historically ignored by state and federal rehabilitation agencies. She is the producer/director of the video series, *Living Your Dreams* that highlights historical contributions of ordinary African Americans to the community. The video series includes *Profiles of African Americans: Their Roles In Shaping Wright State University, A Predominantly White Institution* and *The Story of Neal Loving: Aviator, Experimental Airplane Builder and Double Amputee*.

Jenkins' professional service contributions include serving on the national planning committee for the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Education, an accrediting organization for undergraduate and graduate programs. Jenkins also served as a founding member for four years on the Ohio Counselor and Social Worker Licensure Board where she strongly advocated for practicing rehabilitation counselors.

Jenkins retired in 1993 as Wright State University's Professor Emerita. Jenkins, who is included in the book, *Black Americans in the United States Navy* rose to the rank of full Commander before leaving the Navy in 1984.

Jenkins founded AEJ Associates, her own rehabilitation consulting firm in 1993. Returning to Wright State University, she served as interim director and associate director of the Wright State University Center for Teaching and Learning from 1996 to 1998. She was also associate assistant director of Wright State University's African and African American Studies Program from 1999 to 2001 and coordinator of Youth Programs for the National Conference for Community and Justice from 2001 to 2003. Active in many organizations in her career, Jenkins is a member of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education, Dayton Dialog on Race Relations and the National Rehabilitation Professional Association. She was chosen as one of the Top Ten African American Women in Dayton in 2005 and in 2004, received the Keeping the Dream Alive Award from

the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. In 2000, Jenkins was honored by the Ohio Senate with the Recognition of Outstanding Service Award, among other honors. A resident of Yellow Springs, Ohio, Jenkins is also a video oral historian and sits on the Yellow Springs Community Council.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Alyce Jenkins was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 19, 2006, in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Rehabilitation specialist and military officer Alyce Jenkins (1935 - ) was the first African American female Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy Reserve (USNR).

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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:**

Jenkins, Alyce Earl

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Jenkins, Alyce Earl--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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Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Education

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United States. Navy

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### **Occupations:**

Rehabilitation Specialist

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Military Officer

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### **HistoryMakers® Category:**

MedicalMakers|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 Alyce Jenkins, March 19, 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 Alyce Jenkins, Section  
A2006\_042\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:33 2006/03/19

Alyce Jenkins was born on September 22, 1935 in Birmingham, Alabama to Margaret Wright Cummings and Boysie Orr. Her mother's father, Rufus Wright, worked on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad in Birmingham. Her

grandmother, Alice Wright, was a homemaker and occasionally worked as a seamstress and wet nurse for white families. Growing up in Hartselle, Alabama, Jenkins' mother attended Morgan County Training School. She had five brothers and was a mischievous child. Her mother died of cancer when she was sixteen. She became pregnant with Jenkins and was unable to finish high school. She married Arthur Earl soon after, and Jenkins believed he was her father as a young child. She often spent time with Earl's family in Birmingham. Jenkins' father also grew up in Hartselle. Even before Jenkins knew of their kinship, his mother, Teedie Orr, was kind to her. When Jenkins was young, her father moved to Detroit with Jenkins' half siblings. She visited them at thirteen years old, and remained close to her siblings.

Video Oral History Interview with Alyce Jenkins, Section  
A2006\_042\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:19 2006/03/19

Alyce Jenkins grew up in the Enon Ridge neighborhood of Birmingham, Alabama, where she knew many African American professionals. While her friends' families owned their homes, her family were the only renters on the street. Jenkins' stepfather, Arthur Earl, often barbequed in their yard, and Jenkins enjoyed picnics near the airport with her mother. Jenkins attended Lincoln Elementary School, and lived down the street from its principal, Robert Charles Johnson. She befriended his daughter, Alma Powell. Jenkins's mother encouraged her to study, but she did not enjoy school. She tried to enroll in a printing class, but was forced to learn sewing because of her gender. Jenkins was a majorette in elementary school and at A.H. Parker High School. She was initially rejected from the high school squad, as the director deemed her skin too dark. Her junior year, she was placed on the squad's second line with other darker skinned girls. Jenkins talks about discrimination within the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Alyce Jenkins, Section  
A2006\_042\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:59 2006/03/19

Alyce Jenkins was a studious teenager at A.H. Parker High School, but she also had many friends and took part in social activities such as the prom. She decided to attend

Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College after she was offered a scholarship in 1953. There, she studied printing; pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority; and worked for the registrar, Ralph H. Lee, who became her mentor. While Jenkins grew up with discrimination, she does not describe herself as active in the Civil Rights Movement, although she recalls testing the segregation laws on bus trips. When Jenkins was in college, her mother registered people to vote while selling insurance, and hosted activists in her home. She was a friend of Gertrude Wesley, the mother of Cynthia Wesley who was killed in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. Upon graduation from college in 1957, Jenkins taught printing at Central State College in Wilberforce, Ohio. At twenty-five years old, concerned about becoming a spinster, Jenkins decided to marry.

Video Oral History Interview with Alyce Jenkins, Section  
A2006\_042\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:51 2006/03/19

Alyce Jenkins was tutored in physics from German rocket scientist Wernher von Braun at Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College. Upon graduation, she worked at the office of the registrar, until former classmate Reuben Baxter recruited her to work at the printing press of Central State College. She taught courses and printed the college's publications, including *The Journal on Human Relations*. Among her students was Clay Dixon, Dayton, Ohio's future mayor. In 1965, the school closed the print shop. Jenkins left, intending to become a housewife, but soon wanted to return to work. In 1968, she received her master's degree in rehabilitation counseling at Kent State University. She worked at Dayton State Hospital and Greene Joint Vocational School, then accepted a position at Wilberforce University as a counselor. There, she and Professor Yvonne Seon negotiated with students who wanted to reform the university's academic requirements and restrictive housing policies. She also met figures like John Conyers, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Alyce Jenkins, Section  
A2006\_042\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:20 2006/03/19

Alyce Jenkins befriended her professor, Wilhelmina S. Robinson, at Central State College. She assisted with her

work and, when Robinson passed away, wrote her obituary. Jenkins was content with the results of negotiations with students at Wilberforce University, but their continued agitation influenced Jenkins to accept Perry Hall's offer of a teaching position at Wright State University. There, she met F. Norwood Marquist, whom she looked to as a mentor. They often talked about politics, and Jenkins became involved with the Republican Party. She recalls working with Ohio State Representative Dave Hobson and Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine, and comments on changes in the party. Although she agreed to pursue a Ph.D. degree when she was hired at Wright State University, she changed her mind. Even so, she was promoted to assistant professor, a tenure tracked position, and began publishing with colleagues and serving on departmental committees.

Video Oral History Interview with Alyce Jenkins, Section  
A2006\_042\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:15 2006/03/19

Alyce Jenkins received tenure at Wright State University. She initially struggled to gain respect, especially from her male students. In 1973, Jenkins was asked to take part in the U.S. Navy's minority recruitment program with the campus liaison and Central State University professor, Joseph Lewis. She toured historically black colleges to recruit officers of color to the Navy, and developed a book of African American naval heroes to use as a recruitment tool. Disillusioned by discrimination and nepotism among the officers, Jenkins left the Navy in 1984. She created the C.J. McLin, Jr. Scholarship Fund to fund Wright State University students with exceptional academics and character. From 1993, when she retired from teaching, Jenkins was active on several boards, working with Paul R. Griffith on the National Conference on the Future Shape of Black Religion, and at the Bolinga Black Cultural Resources Center. Jenkins reflects upon her life, as well as her hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Alyce Jenkins, Section  
A2006\_042\_001\_007, TRT: 0:20:30 2006/03/19

Alyce Jenkins reflects upon her legacy, which she considers to be her rehabilitation students. She talks about

her decisions regarding motherhood, and describes how she would like to be remembered. Jenkins concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.