Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Paul Knott

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Knott, Lynda, 1935-2018

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Paul Knott,

Dates: January 14, 2007

Physical Description: 7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:24:17).

Abstract: Cardiologist and hospital executive Dr. Paul Knott (1935 - 2018) dedicated his career to medical administration, was founder of the Correctional Healthcare Administrators, and invented the Knott Lock security device for automobiles. Knott was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 14, 2007, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2007_007

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Cardiologist, inventor and nautical entrepreneur Dr. Paul Knott was born Albert Paul Lowe Knott, Jr. on March 23, 1935 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His ancestors include his paternal great grandfather, A.M.E. Bishop Gaston Knott of Eastern Tennessee (founder of Gaston, Tennessee), his grandfather, Albert Knott, a Morristown College graduate (Class of 1898) and the first Black police officer in Pittsburgh, his father, Albert Paul Knott, Sr., a physician and social activist, his mother, Fannie Meredith Scott Knott, a teacher and her father who was a physician. Knott’s parents were friends of Pittsburgh Courier editor, Robert L.
Vann, and entertained Eleanor Roosevelt, George, Jody and Philippa Schuyler and other notables in their Hill District home. Knott attended the University of Pittsburgh’s Frick School and graduated from Schenley High School, where he swam and was co-captain of the track team in 1952. Entering Yale University at age seventeen, Knott, one of four blacks in his class, co-founded and joined the campus NAACP, the largest university chapter of the organization at that time. He graduated with his B.A. degree in human behavior and cultural anthropology in 1956. Pursuing medicine, Knott earned his M.D. degree from Seton Hall College of Medicine in 1960. That same year, he did an internship at Georgetown University.

Appointed a cardiovascular research fellow at Chicago’s Michael Reese Hospital from 1961 to 1963, Knott became senior medical resident at Hines V.A. Hospital from 1963 to 1965, becoming board eligible in internal medicine and cardiology. Serving in the U.S. Navy, Knott was chief of cardiology at the United States Naval Hospital at Great Lakes, Illinois from 1965 to 1967. There, he wrote a white paper on racial discrimination in public facilities servicing military installations. As a result, a federal law was passed making racial discrimination illegal in public facilities. Knott attended the First World Black Festival of Arts and Culture in Dakar, Senegal in 1966. From 1966 to 1981, he was a cardiology consultant for Daniel Hale Williams Health Center in Chicago, while teaching medicine at Loyola University, the University of Illinois and Rush Medical College. Knott also served on the staff’s of Rush Presbyterian St. Luke’s Medical Center, Mile Square Community Health Center, Louise Burg Hospital, Provident Hospital and Bethany Hospital. At Tabernacle Community Hospital, he was associate medical director from 1972 to 1977. From 1977 to 1981, Knott served as chief medical and administrative officer for Bethany and Garfield Park Hospitals and Clinics. He was chief medical officer and medical administrator for Illinois’ Stateville Correctional Center from 1981 to 1983 where he implemented and directed the development of sick call procedures. Knott was medical director of Chicago’s Metropolitan Correctional Center from 1984 to 1986. Founding Correctional Healthcare Administrators in 1985, Knott has consulted on numerous medical projects. In 1988, he completed a feasibility study and plan for a 50,000 square foot facility at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport. Through the 1990s, Knott worked as an emergency room and trauma physician. He also earned certification in advanced trauma life support.

In the 1980s, Knott established a successful charter boat business with six boats, the largest being a 220 passenger dinner boat. In the early 1990s, he invented and manufactured the Knott Lock, security device for automobiles. Knott, a member of Sigma Pi Phi for over forty years, lives in Chicago with his wife, Lynda and their two children.
Knott passed away on July 20, 2018.

Knott was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 14, 2007.

**Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Dr. Paul Knott was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 14, 2007, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Cardiologist and hospital executive Dr. Paul Knott (1935 - 2018) dedicated his career to medical administration, was founder of the Correctional Healthcare Administrators, and invented the Knott Lock security device for automobiles.

**Restrictions**

**Restrictions on Access**

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

**Restrictions on Use**

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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.

**Controlled Access Terms**
This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

**Persons:**

Knott, Lynda, 1935-2018

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

**Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews
Knott, Lynda, 1935-2018--Interviews

**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

**Occupations:**

Cardiologist

Hospital Executive

**HistoryMakers® Category:**

MedicalMakers

**Administrative Information**

Custodial History
Dr. Paul Knott was born on March 23, 1935 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Fannie Scott Knott and A. Paul Knott, Sr. Knott’s paternal great-grandfather, Gaston Knott, fought in the Civil War; and, when the war ended, was granted land in Tennessee. There, Knott’s paternal grandfather, Albert Knott, met and married Luella Lowe Knott, who was Native American and white. They then moved to Pittsburgh, where Knott’s paternal grandfather became a
Pittsburgh, where Knott’s maternal grandfather became a police officer. Knott’s maternal grandfather, Arthur Scott, taught at the Huntsville Normal School in Alabama, and later opened a blacksmith shop in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Knott’s mother graduated from Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama, and went on to attend Columbia University’s Teachers College in New York City and Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She met Knott’s father in Nashville, Tennessee, where he was enrolled at Meharry Medical College. Knott grew up in Pittsburgh’s Hill District, and often visited his maternal aunt and uncle in Chattanooga.

Dr. Paul Knott grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where his parents hosted guests like future First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and writer George Schuyler. They were also friends of Jessie Matthews Vann, the wife of Pittsburgh Courier editor Robert Vann. During the 1940s, Knott followed the news of World War II on the radio and in newspapers. He began his education at Pittsburgh’s majority-white Henry Clay Frick Training School for Teachers, where he excelled academically. He also studied piano, and played hockey. Knott began swimming competitively at an early age, and continued through his years as a student at Schenley High School. There, he was elected student council president, and ran track with boys who later became professional athletes. Knott was mentored by his shop teacher; and, due to his father’s influence, aspired to become a doctor. Against the advice of his school counselor, Knott applied only to Yale University. He matriculated there in 1952.

Dr. Paul Knott had no black teachers at Schenley High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, although his childhood friend, James Robinson, later became the school’s principal. Upon graduating in 1952, Knott hitchhiked to New Haven, Connecticut, where he matriculated at Yale University. He was one of four black students in his class, although one passed as white. During Knott’s first year, he signed up for a blind date party with
women from Vassar College, but was asked to retract his name because of his race. Although Knott and his family belonged to the NAACP in Pittsburgh, he did not join the chapter on Yale University’s campus, which was run by white students. Knott initially studied anthropology, and took courses in science later in his undergraduate career. During his senior year, he applied only to the Harvard Medical School, but was rejected due to a late grade in organic chemistry. Instead, he enrolled at the newly established Seton Hall College of Medicine and Dentistry in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Paul Knott, Section A2007_007_001_004, TRT: 0:28:30 2007/01/14

Dr. Paul Knott often visited his maternal family in Tennessee, where he was exposed to southern segregation from an early age. While Knott was a student at Schenley High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, several of his peers died in the Korean War, and his cousin was deployed at the age of sixteen years old. Knott went on to attend Yale University, where he was excluded from social activities because of his race, and was the target of pranks during his freshman year. Most of his classmates had attended wealthy, all-white high schools, and had never interacted with the black community. As a result, Knott was often forced to answer rude questions. Many years later, at their fiftieth reunion, Knott’s classmates apologized for their poor treatment of him. Upon graduation, Knott attended the Seton Hall College of Medicine and Dentistry in Jersey City, New Jersey. He often visited New York City, where he befriended Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with whom he later marched in Chicago, Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Paul Knott, Section A2007_007_001_005, TRT: 0:30:12 2007/01/14

Dr. Paul Knott served as a medical intern at the District of Columbia General Hospital in 1960. The following year, he moved to Chicago, Illinois, where he completed his residency at Michael Reese Hospital, and then served as an internal medicine fellow at the Edward Hines Jr. Veterans Administration Hospital. Knott joined the U.S. Navy Reserve during his residency, and was assigned to
active duty from 1965 to 1967. He then returned to Chicago, where there were few black physicians at the time. Knott primarily worked in private practice, and frequently made house calls. He was one of three African American doctors with admitting privileges at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center. He also worked at the Ida Mae Scott Hospital on Chicago’s South Side, and was one of the first physicians on the staff of Reverend Lou Rawls’ Tabernacle Community Hospital and Health Center when it opened in the 1970s. In addition, Knott was a friend of magazine publisher Hugh Hefner, and frequented the Playboy Mansion.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Paul Knott, Section A2007_007_001_006, TRT: 0:29:45 2007/01/14

Dr. Paul Knott grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where his family was active in society. His parents, Fannie Scott Knott and A. Paul Knott, Sr., were members of the Boule, and he first attended one of the organization’s events at Wilberforce University in Ohio during the 1940s. At fifteen years old, Knott attended the Boule gathering in Montgomery, Alabama; and, when his father fell ill, drove to Cincinnati, Ohio to find a hotel that permitted black guests. As an adult, Knott was joined the Boule himself. In addition, Knott enjoyed boating from an early age; and, in the 1980s, decided to start a boat charter business in Chicago, Illinois. He purchased a second yacht in 1987; and, as the business grew, eventually acquired the Wagner Charter Company. His boats often hosted events, including a party for Chicago Mayor Harold Washington. He closed the business in the early 2000s. Knott also invented the Knott Lock, a device designed to prevent car theft, which was popular in Europe.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Paul Knott, Section A2007_007_001_007, TRT: 0:29:28 2007/01/14

Dr. Paul Knott served in the U.S. Navy during the 1960s. Based on his experiences of active duty, he wrote a report condemning segregated housing in the U.S. military, which led to an investigation, and contributed to policy changes. Wanting to increase the social contributions of the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Knott and his fraternity brother, Vernon Jarrett, organized the Percy Julian
Luncheon, which honored top students in the Chicago Public Schools from 1974. Knott underwent surgery for prostate cancer in 2000, and suffered a stroke from the resulting complications; but made a full recovery. He had two children, Albert Knott and Olivia Knott, and three stepchildren. Knott talks about the secret societies at his alma mater, Yale University; and the school’s influence on American politics. He also reflects upon his life and legacy, his hopes and concerns for the African American community and how he would like to be remembered. Knott concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.