

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr.

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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>	Bacon, Robert J., 1923-2009
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 9, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:09:03).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Urologist Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr. (1923 - 2009 ) started a private practice called the Lockwood Professional Group, and had a nineteen year tenure with Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas as a full-time faculty member. Upon retirement, he worked in an STD clinic in Houston and was on the front lines of the HIV epidemic in the black population. Bacon was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 9, 2007, in Houston, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_057
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dr. Robert John Bacon, Sr. was born on March 9, 1923 on the Taylor Plantation in Como, Mississippi to Minnie and Frank Bacon. The family moved to Sardis, Mississippi where they lived in a log cabin when Bacon was age three or four. Later, the family migrated to Lake Forest, Illinois. In 1933, his parents took a “couples” job and had living quarters with the family they worked with. Bacon was left in the care of family friends, Sherman and Alice Black, who raised him from age ten until he graduated from high school. Bacon was introduced to art, literature, dance and music while in grade school. He attended Lake Forest High School with only four other African American students and graduated in 1941.

Bacon entered Fisk University in the fall of 1941. In 1944, during World War II, he accepted an early admission offer to attend Meharry Medical College through the U.S. Army Student Training Program where he received his medical degree in 1947. Bacon also served in the Korean War as a First Lieutenant Medic. He did his internship at Provident Hospital in Chicago, Illinois and his residency at Homer G. Phillips Hospital where he specialized in urology. In 1953, Bacon relocated to Houston, Texas, where he began his own private practice. It was not until other African American physicians came to Houston, however, that his practice began to thrive. Along with a number of other physicians with different specialties, he built the Lockwood Professional Group.

Bacon served on the Board of Directors for the State Department of Corrections for six years and served as a reviewer for the State Board of Medical Examiners also for six years. In 1975, Bacon began his nineteen year tenure with Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas where he served as a full-time faculty member. He was a diplomat of the American Board of Urology and a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and the International College of Surgeons. Upon retirement, he worked in an STD clinic in Houston and was on the front lines of the HIV epidemic in the black population. Bacon was married to the late Bernice Bacon for fifty-eight

years. They had two adult sons: Dr. Robert John Bacon, Jr., a practicing psychiatrist in Houston, Texas, and Kenneth Bacon, an Executive Vice President for Fannie Mae in Washington, D.C.

Bacon was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 9, 2007.

Bacon passed away on March 14, 2009 at age 86.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr. was conducted by Denise Gines on February 9, 2007, in Houston, Texas, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Urologist Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr. (1923 - 2009 ) started a private practice called the Lockwood Professional Group, and had a nineteen year tenure with Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas as a full-time faculty member. Upon retirement, he worked in an STD clinic in Houston and was on the front lines of the HIV epidemic in the black population.

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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:

Bacon, Robert J., 1923-2009

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bacon, Robert J., 1923-2009 --Interviews

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African American physicians--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:**

Urologist

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

MedicalMakers

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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 Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr., February 9, 2007. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### **Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 6/7/2022 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 Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr., Section A2007\_057\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:30 2007/02/09

Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr. was born on March 9, 1923 in Como, Mississippi to Minnie Lee Askew Bacon and Frank Bacon. His mother was born in 1904 in Como, where her father, Robert Askew, worked as a barber prior to his death in a train accident. Bacon's maternal family remained in Como, where they attended Cistern Hill Baptist Church, until Bacon's maternal grandmother, Eunice Jackson, remarried. The family then moved to Arkansas. Bacon's paternal grandfather, Horace Bacon, was a Mason; and, due to his success as a farmer, was one of the few African Americans in Como to own land and a car. Bacon's father, also born in Como in 1904, was raised on the family farm with his three siblings, and had little formal education. Around 1926, when Bacon was three years old, his family followed his paternal grandfather to Sardis, Mississippi, where his grandfather had moved for a business opportunity. In 1929, they moved again to Lake Forest, Illinois.

African American families--Illinois.

African Americans--Migrations--History--20th century.

African American families--Mississippi.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr., Section A2007\_057\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:20 2007/02/09

Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr. was born on the Taylor Plantation in Como, Mississippi. Later, his family moved to Lake Forest, Illinois, where the integrated community included African American business owners like William Casselberry, Arthur Casselberry and livery owner Alfonso Williams, as well as white millionaires like dancer Irene Castle McLaughlin. In Lake Forest, Bacon attended the Gorton School and the Halsey School, where the arts were emphasized by his teachers and Superintendent John E. Baggett. In school, he heard records by concert singer Marian Anderson, as well as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Bacon received the second highest grades in his class, with only Ruth Cohen scoring higher; but, due to discrimination, neither he nor Cohen received the American Legion award customarily given to the top boy and girl in the year. Superintendent Baggett practiced corporal punishment, and Bacon was also punished by his mother whenever he misbehaved in school. He enrolled at Lake Forest High School in 1937.

African American children--Illinois--Lake Forest.

African Americans--Education--Illinois.

Chicago (Ill.).

Julius Rosenwald Fund--Buildings.

African Americans--Education--Mississippi.

Spirituals (Songs).

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr., Section A2007\_057\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:13 2007/02/09

Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr. attended a school built by philanthropist Julius Rosenwald in Sardis, Mississippi before moving to Lake Forest, Illinois at the age of five years old. There, his parents worked as live-in domestics, and he resided with their family friends, Alice Black and Sherman Black, who corresponded with his teachers and taught him to box. In 1937, Bacon enrolled at Lake Forest High School. Inspired by jazz artists like Louis Armstrong and Stuff Smith, he planned to join the school band, but played on the football team

instead. He came in conflict with Coach Edgar William Lindenmeyer, who disliked that Bacon sometimes missed practice to care for Elizabeth Coleman, a childless widow in the community. Bacon was dismissed from the team, but was allowed to return after Coleman advocated on his behalf. Also during high school, Bacon attended a Marian Anderson concert with his English class, and worked as a delivery boy at the Krafft Drug Store with his friend, Henry McIntosh.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Illinois--Lake Forest.

Mentoring.

Fisk University.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr., Section A2007\_057\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:20 2007/02/09

Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr. enrolled in 1941 at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he befriended his roommate, Calvin James, Jr. from Gary, Indiana. Bacon had not previously attended an all-black school, and he expanded his social life, dating classmates like Raven Rivera and Betty Grayson Turpin. Bacon was elected president of his class, and played on the football team during its first winning season in years. He planned to attend medical school, and studied under professors St. Elmo Brady, James Raymond Lawson and Charles S. Johnson. During World War II, Bacon left Fisk University to join the Army Specialized Training Program. He considered attending the United States Military Academy in West Point, but decided not to apply after hearing about the discrimination against General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. He completed basic training at Camp Forrest in Tennessee, and then enrolled at Meharry Medical College for accelerated medical instruction. There, he studied anatomy under Professor A.A. Williams.

Fisk University.

United States. Army--African Americans.

Korean War, 1950-1953--United States.

Tuskegee Syphilis Study.

Meharry Medical College.

Nashville (Tenn.).

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr., Section A2007\_057\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:10 2007/02/09

Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr. attended Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee during the 1940s. At the time, the Tuskegee syphilis experiment was ongoing, and the National Medical Association was denounced for advocating socialist healthcare. Bacon admired African American doctors like surgeon Matthew Walker, Sr., and urologist R. Frank Jones of Howard University. He was mentored by urologist Walter H. Grant while interning at Provident Hospital in Chicago, Illinois; and became a urology resident at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. After his residency, he served as a surgeon in the Korean War, where he was denied promotions due to the discriminatory policies of General Douglas MacArthur, and witnessed South Korean protests against the American occupation. Bacon left the U.S. Army in 1953, and moved to Houston, Texas, where he partnered with physicians Louis Robey, John Madison, Blanchard Hollins and Herman Barnett III to found the all-black Lockwood Professional Group.

Meharry Medical College.

Korean War, 1950-1953--United States.

United States. Army--African Americans.  
African American physicians--Social conditions--Texas--Houston.  
Education, Higher--Tennessee--Nashville.  
Homer G. Phillips Hospital.  
Provident Hospital (Chicago, Ill.).  
Medicine--Practice--Texas--Houston.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr., Section A2007\_057\_001\_006, TRT:  
0:30:20 2007/02/09

Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr. belonged to the Houston Medical Forum, which provided bail to student groups like the Progressive Youth Association during the sit-in movement in Houston, Texas. He served as the finance chairman of Barbara Jordan's successful campaigns for the Texas Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives; and, in that capacity, met President Lyndon Baines Johnson. In 1975, Bacon joined Houston's Baylor College of Medicine as a professor of urology. He went on to serve on the school's admissions committee. He also heard medical malpractice cases for the state review board, and directed an outpatient clinic at Ben Taub Hospital. In 1994, Bacon retired from teaching, and began working for a sexual health clinic run by the City of Houston. He served on the board of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, and as secretary-treasurer of the Houston Urological Society. Bacon also describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, and how he would like to be remembered.

African American physicians--Texas--Houston.  
Civil rights movements--Texas--Houston.  
African American physicians--Texas--Houston.  
Baylor University. College of Medicine.  
Education, Higher--Texas--Houston.  
African Americans--Employment.  
Houston Medical Forum.  
Sexually transmitted diseases--Texas--Houston.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr., Section A2007\_057\_001\_007, TRT:  
0:08:10 2007/02/09

Dr. Robert J. Bacon, Sr. narrates his photographs.  
Photographs.