

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Fruteland Jackson

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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>	Jackson, Fruteland
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Fruteland Jackson,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 13, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:19:30).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Music instructor and blues musician Fruteland Jackson (1953 - ) is an acoustic guitarist and singer who founded the "Blues in the Schools" program. Jackson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 13, 2007, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_064
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Blues musician and music instructor Fruteland Jackson was born Vincent Sherman Chandler on June 9, 1953 in Doddsville, Sunflower County, Mississippi. His maternal family tree can be documented back to 1863. Jackson is the fourth of six children born to John Chandler and Ida B. Collins. His childhood years were spent in Chicago and Mississippi. Jackson was raised in a musical family and was introduced to the guitar at the age of ten but had little interest in studying the instrument. Instead, Jackson played bugle and trombone while in high school. Jackson graduated from high school in 1970 and entered Columbia College in Chicago, Illinois, where he studied music and theater. He later studied vocal performance at Chicago's Roosevelt University. Jackson then postponed his artistic ambitions to work as a private investigator and with the State of Illinois Department of Human Rights.

In 1980, Jackson moved back to Mississippi, settling in Biloxi. From 1981 to 1985, he owned and operated Camel Seafood Company. Hurricane Elena of 1985 had devastating effects in Mississippi and left Jackson without a business. At this time, he returned to his musical ambitions and immersed himself in study of the guitar and in blues music.

Jackson performs and preserves acoustic blues from both traditional and contemporary styles including field hollers, work songs, Delta blues and Piedmont blues. In 1996, Jackson helped to establish the "Blues In The Schools" program. Jackson's educational blues programs have been presented at schools and universities throughout the United States. In 1996, Jackson was awarded the Illinois Arts Council Folk/Ethnic Heritage Award. In 2003, he was nominated for the W.C. Handy Award as "Acoustic Blues Album of the Year", for his album, *Blues 2.0*. Jackson records for Electro-Fi Records.

Fruteland Jackson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 12, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Fruteland Jackson was conducted by Sasha Dalton on February 13, 2007, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Music instructor and blues musician Fruteland Jackson (1953 - ) is an acoustic guitarist and singer who founded the "Blues in the Schools" program.

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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:

Jackson, Fruteland

Dalton, Sasha (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jackson, Fruteland--Interviews

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Blues musicians--Interviews.

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African American musicians--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:

Blues Musician

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Music Instructor

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### HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers|MusicMakers

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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 Fruteland Jackson, February 13, 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 Fruteland Jackson, Section A2007\_064\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:30  
2007/02/13

Fruteland Jackson was born as Vincent Chandler on June 9, 1953 in Doddsville, Mississippi. Jackson's mother, Ida Collins, was born in 1926 in Doddsville.

Collin's grandparents were originally from Florence, Mississippi, but fled to Doddsville after they were assaulted by whites when her grandmother's interracial affair was discovered. Collins attended Delta High School and Alcorn State College in Mississippi. Jackson's father, John Chandler, was born in 1923 in Inverness, Mississippi where his father, Jackson's paternal grandfather, was a minister who pastored three local churches. Chandler served in the U.S. Army during World War II, and returned to Mississippi to operate a grocery store. Jackson's parents met in high school in Mississippi and moved the family to Chicago, Illinois in approximately 1947 after Jackson's father got into an argument with white proprietors of a nearby gas station. In Chicago, Chandler worked as an insurance agent and Collins was a nurse at Cook County Hospital. African American neighborhoods--Mississippi--Doddsville.

Human skin color--Social aspects--Mississippi.

African American families--Mississippi.

Blues (Music)--History and criticism.

Video Oral History Interview with Fruteland Jackson, Section A2007\_064\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:50  
2007/02/13

Fruteland Jackson has seven siblings; his eldest brother John suffered from polio since childhood but grew up to be a successful lawyer. Jackson was close with his maternal step-grandfather, Willie Bradley; Jackson was baptized in his maternal grandparents' church during one of the many childhood summers he spent in Mississippi. Jackson grew up in Chicago, Illinois; his family moved so frequently he attended six different elementary schools. Due to his good grades, Jackson attended Robert Lindblom Technical High School for ninth and tenth grade. He joined the Nation of Islam at sixteen years old, after his parents' divorce, and graduated high school from the University of Islam School in 1970. The school was discredited shortly after Jackson graduated and multiple scandals related to the organization became public following the death of Elijah Muhammad. By the time he was twenty years old, Jackson was disillusioned by the Nation and broke his affiliation with the organization.

African American families--Mississippi.

African American children--Education (Primary)--Mississippi.

African American teachers--Illinois--Chicago.

Black Muslims--Education.

Nation of Islam (Chicago, Ill.).

Video Oral History Interview with Fruteland Jackson, Section A2007\_064\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:00  
2007/02/13

Fruteland Jackson worked in food service at a hospital and at a steak-n-take restaurant in Chicago, Illinois after graduating from high school in 1970. In approximately 1974, he began working as a private investigator for E.V. Allen and Associates. In 1977, Jackson's mother died, which motivated him to begin his degree at Columbia College in Chicago majoring in theater with a minor in music. He did not complete the degree and felt alienated by his music teachers. Jackson entered two short-lived marriages as a young adult, and had two children. In 1981, Jackson moved to Biloxi, Mississippi with his third wife Jennice, and started Camel Seafood. The company was successful until 1985, when Hurricane Elena destroyed the shrimp beds. Jackson became passionate about music when he moved to Mississippi, but his interest in the blues began as a child listening to his uncle Woodrow Chandler play the guitar. He describes the process of becoming a self-taught musician, and describes the origin of his stage name.

Ethnic neighborhoods--Illinois--Chicago--History--20th century.

Shrimp industry--Gulf Coast (U.S.)

Parents--Death--Psychological aspects.

Video Oral History Interview with Fruteland Jackson, Section A2007\_064\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:00  
2007/02/13

Fruteland Jackson owned Camel Seafood in Mississippi and worked at a McDonnell Douglas factory in St. Louis, Missouri during the 1980s. After he was laid off from McDonnell Douglas, he returned to Chicago, Illinois, and explored careers in astrology and photography. He eventually rekindled his passion for playing the guitar and began his career playing the acoustic blues in a duo at festivals. Jackson describes some of his influences, including David “Honeyboy” Edwards, Charley Patton, and HistoryMakers B.B. King, Lonnie Brooks and Robert Lockwood Jr. Jackson believes that the blues is a dying art. To help preserve the genre he helped found the Blues in the Schools (BITS) program, for which he has traveled worldwide; taught students from kindergarten to college; and, given presentations to schools recovering from trauma, such as Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Jackson received a KBA Award for his work. He demonstrates the difference between Piedmont and Delta blues.

Hurricane Elena, 1985.

Hurricanes--Gulf Coast (U.S.)

Hurricanes--Economic aspects--Mississippi.

Shrimp industry--United States.

McDonnell Douglas Corporation.

Blues (Music)--Instruction and study.

Video Oral History Interview with Fruteland Jackson, Section A2007\_064\_001\_005, TRT: 0:22:10  
2007/02/13

Fruteland Jackson elaborates on the history of the Piedmont blues style, and plays a song he wrote that employs the style. Thinking back on the scope of his life, he remembers in particular his experiences traveling to Russia and Italy for Blues in the Schools. Jackson shares advice for those interested in a career in blues music, talks about his ambitions for future work and explains the importance of knowing one’s history. Jackson reflects upon his life and legacy and concludes by narrating his photographs.

Blues (Music)--Instruction and study.

Blues (Music)--History and criticism.