

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ann Yancy

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Yancy, Ann, 1930-2018
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ann Yancy,
Dates:	February 13, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:51:15).
Abstract:	Gospel singer Ann Yancy (1930 - 2018) had a long career as a gospel singer both in Chicago and nationally. In addition to performing around the country with famous Gospel ensembles, Yancy's children also became successful within the Gospel music community. Yancy was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 13, 2007, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_066
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Gospel music pioneer Ann Yancy was born on October 29, 1930, in Memphis, Tennessee. Yancy was the product of a deeply religious family, which includes uncles the Reverends Morris and Henry Edmonds; her brother Reverend Samuel Jordon; and her cousin Reverend Daniel Edmonds, all of Memphis, Tennessee. Yancy's vocal talents were recognized at the age of eight while she was singing in the junior choir at Pearly Gates Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, where she later became a member of the Sunshine Band.

Yancy was the fourth of seven children born to Leah Edmonds Brown and Elijah Rhodes of Lucy, Tennessee. Yancy graduated from Manasses Elementary School in Memphis, Tennessee. The family moved to Chicago, Illinois, in 1942, where she resided until 1943, when she moved to Gary, Indiana, with her aunt Lassie Edmonds Blair. Yancy attended Friederich Froebel High School and returned to Chicago in 1945.

In 1948, Yancy married Rev. Robert Yancy, Associate Pastor of Greater Harvest Missionary Baptist Church; she was widowed in 1973. Yancy and her husband had eight children (three became ministers): Reverends Kevin, and Darryl, the late Reverend Marvin J. Yancy, Derrick, Stevie, Sherwin, and Judy Yancy. Reverend Kevin Yancy, was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1980 for producing the Gospel album *Rev. Marvin J. Yancy and The Fountain of Life Joy Choir*; Reverends Marvin and Kevin Yancy were the writers and producers of the Grammy Award nominated gospel recording, *Heavy Load* in 1985.

Yancy was an intricate part of the rich tapestry of Chicago Gospel music history; she was one of the lead soloists at Greater Harvest Missionary Baptist Church, and a member of the renowned, Sylvia Boddie Gospel Singers. Yancy traveled throughout the United States with R.L. Knowles, The Robert Anderson Singers, and Willie Webb and the Roberta Martin Singers. Yancy appeared on recordings with the Robert Anderson Singers, the Roberta Martin Singers, and The Yancy Family Album. Yancy founded The Marvin Yancy Scholarship Foundation, and frequently spoke at Gospel conferences and seminars on the history of Gospel music.

Yancy passed away on March 12, 2018 at age 87.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ann Yancy was conducted by Sasha Dalton on February 13, 2007, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Gospel singer Ann Yancy (1930 - 2018) had a long career as a gospel singer both in Chicago and nationally. In addition to performing around the country with famous Gospel ensembles, Yancy's children also became successful within the Gospel music community.

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®.

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:

Yancy, Ann, 1930-2018

Daltonn, Sasha (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Yancy, Ann, 1930-2018--Interviews

African American gospel singers--Interviews

African American singers--Interviews

Gospel musicians--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Gospel Singer

HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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 Ann Yancy, 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 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).

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.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Ann Yancy, Section
A2007_066_001_001, TRT: 0:29:10 2007/02/13

Ann Yancy was born on October 29, 1930 in Memphis, Tennessee to Leah Edmonds Brown and Elijah Rhodes. Yancy's maternal grandmother, Caldonia Edmonds, was Cherokee, and her maternal grandfather, James Edmonds, was a former slave. He was educated as a child; became a minister; and helped organize churches in Woodstock, Tennessee. Yancy's mother and maternal grandparents moved to Memphis, Tennessee after Yancy's first three siblings were born. Yancy never knew her father or his family, as he left when she was young, and her mother remarried. Yancy was raised by her maternal grandparents in Memphis, along with her sister, Pauline Blair Durr, and brother, Eugene Blair. There, they lived in a close-knit, African American community. Yancy's maternal grandfather stayed home after losing his leg, and taught her Bible stories, while her grandmother worked for the Works Progress Administration. Yancy attended Memphis' Pearly Gates Baptist Church, where she taught Sunday school lessons from the age of nine years old.

Video Oral History Interview with Ann Yancy, Section
A2007_066_001_002, TRT: 0:29:20 2007/02/13

Ann Yancy grew up with her maternal grandparents in Memphis, Tennessee, and attended Manassas High School until their deaths when she was about nine years old. Yancy joined her mother's household in Memphis, and worked as a domestic for twelve hours each day to provide for her mother and siblings. Her family then moved to Chicago, Illinois, where Yancy's older sister and her husband lived. Yancy stayed there only a few months, before she moved to Gary, Indiana to live with her aunt, Lassie Edmonds Blair. Yancy recalls her happiness in Gary, where she sang as a soloist at St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, and took voice and piano lessons. Yancy attended Gary's integrated Friedrich Froebel High School until the eleventh grade, when her mother required her to return to Chicago. There, Yancy was unable to finish high school, as her mother forced her to find a job to support her family. She worked in a Wieboldt Stores café, and attended Chicago's Pilgrim Rest Missionary Baptist Church.

Video Oral History Interview with Ann Yancy, Section
A2007_066_001_003, TRT: 0:29:40 2007/02/13

Ann Yancy was unable to finish high school, as she had to work to provide for her family. She became a waitress at Wieboldt Stores and the Eastman Kodak Company in Chicago, Illinois. Customers often asked her to sing the songs of Billy Eckstine and other blues artists; and, in return, bought her lunch. Then, Yancy lived and worked in a foster home with her brother, while her mother moved to Gary, Indiana for a short time. When her mother returned to Chicago, Yancy moved into her home on Dearborn Street. While out for a walk, she met Reverend Louis Boddie near the Greater Harvest Missionary Baptist Church. Soon after that meeting, Yancy joined the church, and became a soloist in the choir, which included Robert Anderson. Led by Sylvia Boddie, the choir became Yancy's surrogate family, with Reverend Boddie acting as her father figure. At the church, she performed with many famous gospel singers, including Clara Ward and Mahalia Jackson. In 1948, Yancy married the church's assistant pastor, Robert Yancy, Sr.

Video Oral History Interview with Ann Yancy, Section

A2007_066_001_004, TRT: 0:30:30 2007/02/13

Ann Yancy married Robert Yancy, Sr., who was the assistant pastor of Greater Harvest Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois. At the church, Yancy sang with the Eight Girls of Harmony choir, which was led by the head pastor's wife, Sylvia Boddie. The choir also performed nationally at conventions and churches. Yancy was the choir's lead soloist, and her friend, Opal Stewart, was the second soloist. She had a close relationship with Sylvia Boddie and her husband, Reverend Louis Boddie, who taught her about compassion, charity and how to have a good marriage. In 1955, Yancy's husband became the head pastor of the First Gideon Baptist Church in Chicago. He remained there for eight years, before organizing Chicago's Fountain of Life Baptist Church. Yancy and her husband had eight children, all but one of whom sang in the church choir. Her family lived in the Cabrini-Green Homes in Chicago's Near North Side neighborhood, and Yancy served on the local community advisory committee.

Video Oral History Interview with Ann Yancy, Section

A2007_066_001_005, TRT: 0:29:30 2007/02/13

Ann Yancy earned her GED certificate, and studied for a degree in social work at Loop Junior College in Chicago, Illinois after her children were born. While in school, she worked at the Holy Family Head Start as a teacher, and then as a social worker. All but one of Yancy's children sang in the choir at the Fountain of Life Baptist Church, and two of them became pastors. When Yancy's husband, Robert Yancy, Sr., passed away in the early 1970s, her son, Marvin Yancy, took over as the head pastor of the Fountain of Life Baptist Church. There, he and his brother, Kevin Yancy, led the Fountain of Life Joy Choir, which performed nationally. The pair wrote numerous gospel songs, including 'Sign Me Up' and 'Heavy Load,' which was nominated for a Grammy Award. Marvin Yancy also arranged music for his wife, Natalie Cole, who was the daughter of Nat King Cole. Marvin Yancy passed away in 1985, and Yancy established the Marvin Yancy Foundation to provide educational and music scholarships to students in his name.

Video Oral History Interview with Ann Yancy, Section

Ann Yancy performed as a gospel singer at churches in Chicago, Illinois, in addition to touring professionally throughout the United States with gospel artists such as the Roberta Martin Singers, Robert Anderson and the Good Shepherd Singers and Mahalia Jackson. At the time of the interview, she continued to record music with singers like Jessy Dixon and her sons. Yancy hopes to be remembered as a gospel singer and a motivator of young African American women. She reflects upon her life, and her favorite scripture from the Bible, Psalm 51: 1-11. She also sings her favorite gospel song, 'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus.' Yancy concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.