

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Martha Jordan

PERSON

Jordan, Martha, 1927-2016

Alternative Names: Martha Jordan;

Life Dates: January 22, 1927-May 28, 2016

Place of Birth: St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Residence: Las Vegas, NV

Occupations: Dancer; Entertainer

Biographical Note

Martha Jordan was born on January 22, 1927, in St. Louis, Missouri. Jordan was adopted as a baby by Dr. Chalmers Weaver, a local dentist and his wife, Eliza. Jordan attended Simmons Elementary School, and because of her love for music, Jordan took tap and ballet classes as well as piano lessons. Jordan then attended Charles H. Sumner High School where she danced in the Y Circus, a type of music revue that featured popular musicians of that time; she graduated in 1943, at age sixteen.

Jordan promised her parents that she would go to college if they allowed her to work at the Plantation Club in St. Louis as a dancer for one year. When that year ended, she did not attend college, and instead went to Chicago with show producer-dancer Hortense Allen Jordan to work at the Rhumboogie Club as a chorus girl. Jordan performed with the chorus line for shows that featured Cab Calloway, Nat King Cole, Duke Ellington, and Pearl Bailey, who was one of her good friends. Jordan appeared in one of the first all African American shows in Las Vegas at the Dunes Hotel: *Smart Affairs*, produced by Larry Steele.

In the early 1960s, Jordan moved to Los Angeles during the decline in popularity of chorus line shows; there she took a real estate course and received her broker's license. At this time, Jordan became engaged to music great, Louis Jordan, and they married in 1966. Louis Jordan was famous for his recorded hits, *Let the Good Times Roll* and *Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby*. Jordan traveled and sang with the Louis Jordan Band and took care of the finances. Jordan stopped touring in the early 1970s and began working as an office manager for a Santa Monica elementary school. Louis Jordan passed away in 1975, and in 1980, Jordan moved to Las Vegas where she worked for the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department as a records technician. She then retired in 1990.

Jordan served as president of the Las Vegas Chapter of Links, Inc.; a member of the Girl Friends, Inc.; and founder and CEO of the Louie Jordan Commemorative Scholarship Foundation.

Jordan passed away on May 28, 2016 at age 89.

Related Entries

Charles H. Sumner High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Simmons Elementary School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Saint Louis University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Plantation Club [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Chorus Girl

Rhumboogie Cafe [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Chorus Girl

Dunes Hotel [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Chorus Girl

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Records Technician

Girl Reserves of the Young Women's Christian

Association [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Y Circus [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Dancer

Society Of Singers [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Links, Inc. [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

The Girl Friends, Inc. [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Louis Jordan Commemorative Scholarship
Foundation** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

founder and president

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]