

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Barrietta Killiebrew

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Killiebrew, Barrietta, 1960-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Barrietta Killiebrew,
Dates:	October 18, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:15:15).
Abstract:	Real estate agent Barrietta Killiebrew (1960 -) served with the United States Army Corps of Engineers as a contract specialist from 1986 to 2007. She is the owner of the Wildwood Plantation, which she was able to get officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006. The plantation was built by enslaved Africans. Killiebrew was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 18, 2007, in Ferguson, Missouri. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_296
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Real estate agent and Contract Specialist, Barrietta Killiebrew was born on September 23, 1960 in Chicago, Illinois. Born to Carol Austin and James Boyd, the oldest of eight children, Killiebrew was raised in St. Louis and Ferguson, Missouri. Killiebrew attended Blewitt Elementary and Ferguson Junior High School in St. Louis. In 1979, she graduated from McClure High School in nearby Ferguson, Missouri. Killiebrew graduated with her A.B. degree from Florissant Valley College in 1982. She went on to earn her B.A. degree in telecommunications from Lindenwood College in St. Charles, Missouri. She interned in public affairs at the local Fox television affiliate, then in 1986, Killiebrew was hired by the United States Department of Defense. She currently holds a position as a Contract Specialist with The St. Louis District, Corps of Engineers.

In 1998, Killiebrew began her career in real estate by working for Caldwell Banker Gundaker. That same year, she focused on purchasing a Ferguson landmark, the Wildwood Plantation. The Wildwood Plantation was built by Africans enslaved by Major Joseph LaMotte more than 150 years ago. Ironically, LaMotte served as Lt. Commander of the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts at Fort Clark, Texas during the Mexican War. He had Wildwood built in 1856, which looks similar to his father's North Berm House in North Carolina – also built before slavery ended. After the Emancipation Proclamation, the house passed through some six different owners and stood vacant for almost sixty years during the time span of 150 years. Surviving a considerable legal struggle with local housing inspectors, Killiebrew became the first African American owner of the Wildwood Plantation.

Constantly engaged in the restoration of the plantation, Killiebrew was able to get Wildwood officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006. Knowledgeable of the stories and mythology surrounding the property, she conducts historical tours by appointment.

Killiebrew and her mother have made Wildwood their home. She has two sons living in Japan: Antoine, who

previously served in the U.S. Navy and is currently living in Japan with his wife, Eiko and Danny, who is currently serving in the U.S. Air Force and is stationed in Japan.

Killiebrew was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 18, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Barrietta Killiebrew was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 18, 2007, in Ferguson, Missouri, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Real estate agent Barrietta Killiebrew (1960 -) served with the United States Army Corps of Engineers as a contract specialist from 1986 to 2007. She is the owner of the Wildwood Plantation, which she was able to get officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006. The plantation was built by enslaved Africans.

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:

Killiebrew, Barrietta, 1960-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Killiebrew, Barrietta, 1960- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Cultural Heritage Educator

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Barrietta Killiebrew, October 18, 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 5/30/2023 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 Barrietta Killiebrew, Section A2007_296_001_001, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Barrietta Killiebrew describes her family background and childhood. Her mother, Carol Killiebrew Austin, was born in 1944 in St. Louis, Missouri. Killiebrew used Ancestry.com to trace her maternal ancestors to Kentucky. Her paternal great grandfather was of African and Italian ancestry. In St. Louis, Killiebrew's mother attended Soldan High School where she met James Boyce, Killiebrew's father. Killiebrew was born on September 23, 1960 in Chicago, Illinois. She was raised by her mother and stepfather in St. Louis where her mother was a factory worker for the Lincoln Industrial Corporation. Killiebrew believes she takes after her father, though she had limited interactions with him. Killiebrew had seven younger half-siblings. The family frequently moved between neighborhoods in St. Louis. Killiebrew describes her childhood personality as well as the role of music and church in her upbringing. She remembers a lesson she learned while attending Blewitt Elementary School in St. Louis.

Video Oral History Interview with Barrietta Killiebrew, Section A2007_296_001_002, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Barrietta Killiebrew recounts her education and career. After moving from St. Louis to Ferguson, Missouri in 1972, she attended integrated schools, Ferguson Junior High School, and then McClure High School. Graduating in January 1978, she enrolled at St. Louis Community College-Florissant Valley in Ferguson. That same year, Killiebrew was married and also had her first son. After receiving her A.A. degree in data processing in 1980, she went on to Lindenwood College in St. Charles, Missouri, majoring in telecommunications and interning at Channel Two in St. Louis. After receiving her B.A. degree in 1986, she became a computer operator for the IRS while also substitute teaching in Normandy, Missouri's public schools. Killiebrew then became a government contract specialist, moving between federal agencies, and eventually working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In 1998, she began working in real estate and in 2000, Killiebrew purchased Wildwood Plantation in Ferguson, originally owned by Joseph LaMotte.

Video Oral History Interview with Barrietta Killiebrew, Section A2007_296_001_003, TRT: 0:31:40 ?

Barrietta Killiebrew describes the history of her house, Wildwood Plantation in Ferguson, Missouri. Wildwood was originally commissioned by U.S. Army Lieutenant and Mexican-American War veteran Joseph LaMotte, the son of a white French refugee of the 1791 Haitian Revolution. Built by LaMotte's slaves in 1856, the plantation was a home to Motte's descendants for decades. It was also home to a St. Louis, Missouri radio personality during the 1920s and 1930s. The home was vacant for several years before 2000, when Killiebrew decided to buy it from its then owners, the Love family. They agreed upon a contract, but upon discovering her race as a black woman, the Loves attempted to cancel and obstruct the sale. Nevertheless, Killiebrew applied legal pressure and acquired the house. Later, after inspectors from the City of Ferguson discovered Wildwood's back porch to be structurally unsound, a local judge attempted to punitively fine Killiebrew one thousand dollars per day until the porch was replaced.

Video Oral History Interview with Barrietta Killiebrew, Section A2007_296_001_004, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Barrietta Killiebrew talks about managing and living on Wildwood Plantation in Ferguson, Missouri. After inspectors from the City of Ferguson discovered that Wildwood's back porch was rotting, a local judge attempted to fine her one thousand dollars per day until it was replaced. However, a courtroom secretary

connected Killiebrew with Missouri governor Mel Carnahan's office, which ordered the judge to give her six months to replace the porch. Ferguson city officials later lobbied to have Wildwood placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006. Killiebrew lives at Wildwood, offering tours and renting the space for special events like the site's first African American wedding. Killiebrew talks about Wildwood's Plantation's eighteenth-century French inspired furnishings. She also describes the spirits said to inhabit the house and proposals for archeological digs at the site.

Video Oral History Interview with Barrietta Killiebrew, Section A2007_296_001_005, TRT: 0:14:55 ?

Barrietta Killiebrew reflects upon her life and legacy. She talks about her hopes to expand Wildwood Plantation in Ferguson, Missouri and to have it serve both as a museum of slavery and Southern history, and as an inspirational model of African American entrepreneurship. She expresses her concern that the African American community suffers a deficit of trust and strong family ties, and her hope that they can overcome this and become more engaged with local, national, and global issues. Her community service includes volunteering with the Gateway Classic Football Game to raise scholarship funds and participating in the Optimist Club of St. Louis, Missouri. She has two sons, Antoine and Danny, both living in Japan at the time of interview. Killiebrew talks about her attempts to find descendants of the men and women enslaved on Wildwood Plantation. She also describes how she would like to be remembered.