

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Everett Greene

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Greene, Everett
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Everett Greene,
Dates:	November 12, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:02:48).
Abstract:	Singer Everett Greene (1934 -) recorded his debut album in 1994 called "At Last." His other albums include "I've Got Love" and "My Foolish Heart." He has also acted in musicals including "Showboat" and received a local Emmy Award in Chicago for the nationally-aired TV special entitled "Precious Memories: Strolling 47th Street." Greene was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 12, 2007, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_327
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Singer Everett Francis Greene, Sr. was born on February 16, 1934 in Washington, D.C. to Lillian and Lawrence Greene. He grew up in the Barry Farms section of the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, D.C. As a youth, Greene began performing in school quartets. He continued to perform with his quartet after entering the Marine Corps in 1952. Following a tour in Korea, Greene married and started a family in Indianapolis, Indiana. He worked as a mold maker and then in the melting department in Indianapolis' industrial manufactories. It was not until after his retirement in 1982 that Greene focused on his professional music career.

Greene was a bass singer who trained himself to sing at a higher range. He performed in his church and regularly throughout the local Indianapolis music scene. He recorded his debut album, "At Last," in Chicago in 1994, followed by his release of "My Foolish Heart" in 1998 and "I've Got Love" in 2002. He was then featured with the Buselli-Wallarab Jazz Orchestra on the album, *Heart & Soul: The Music of Hoagy Carmichael*.

Greene has co-starred with folk singer Odetta Gordon and Broadway star Jean DuShon in an extended run of *The Little Dreamer: A Night in the Life of Bessie Smith* at the Ivanhoe Theater in Chicago. In addition, Greene has portrayed "Joe" in *Showboat*. Greene received a local Emmy Award in Chicago for the nationally-aired TV special entitled *Precious Memories: Strolling 47th Street*. He has been in a number of television commercials for The Hoosier Lottery, the Indiana Pacers, H.H. Gregg and Cincinnati Bell. Greene has toured in the United States, Japan and Canada with the musical revue *In the House of the Blues*.

Everett Greene was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 12, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Everett Greene was conducted by Larry Murphy on November 12, 2007, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Singer Everett Greene (1934 -) recorded his debut album in 1994 called "At Last." His other albums include "I've Got Love" and "My Foolish Heart." He has also acted in musicals including "Showboat" and received a local Emmy Award in Chicago for the nationally-aired TV special entitled "Precious Memories: Strolling 47th Street."

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:

Greene, Everett

Murphy, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Greene, Everett--Interviews

African American singers--Interviews.

African American actors--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

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 Everett Greene, November 12, 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 Everett Greene, Section A2007_327_001_001, TRT: 0:28:42 ?
Everett Greene was born on February 16, 1934 in Washington, D.C. to Lillian Lewis Greene and Lawrence Greene, both of whom were also born and raised in Washington, D.C. His mother had six siblings, and was a close friend of bandleader Billy Eckstine, although Greene's maternal grandmother, Margaret

Lewis, disapproved of their relationship. Greene's parents met in Washington, D.C., where his mother raised Greene and his nine siblings while his father worked. Greene was exposed to music from an early age. His mother often sang gospel songs like 'Standing in the Safety Zone' at home, and Greene frequently accompanied his father while he performed as a drummer around the city. Greene's family attended Washington, D.C.'s Bethlehem Baptist Church, where Greene sang in the choir with his mother and sister, who often performed duets. Later, his family formed a vocal group called The Greene Singers, and sang at events throughout Washington, D.C.

African American families--Washington (D.C.).

African American mothers--Religious life.

African American musicians--Washington (D.C.).

African American singers.

African American churches--Washington (D.C.).

Gospel music--United States.

Gospel musicians.

Video Oral History Interview with Everett Greene, Section A2007_327_001_002, TRT: 0:31:07 ?

Everett Greene's paternal grandfather, Garfield Greene, was a food delivery driver in Washington, D.C., where Greene's father, Lawrence Greene, and his six siblings were raised. As an adult, Greene's father worked at the navy yard in Washington, D.C., in addition to performing as a drummer in the city's nightclubs, gambling and managing the Anacostia ACs baseball team. Greene frequently accompanied his father to baseball games; made trips with his siblings to the National Zoological Park; and often spent time with his paternal grandfather, with whom he was close. Greene was raised in the Barry Farm neighborhood of southeast Washington D.C., where his family often shared food with their neighbors during the Great Depression. He began his education at James G. Birney Elementary School, where he belonged to the glee club. As a teenager, Greene formed a quartet called The Melodaires, and often performed on the street until the early morning.

African American children--Washington (D.C.).

African American fathers.

African American children--Social life and customs.

African American families--Washington (D.C.).

Video Oral History Interview with Everett Greene, Section A2007_327_001_003, TRT: 0:30:49 ?

Everett Greene grew up in the Barry Farm neighborhood of Washington, D.C. There, he carried his neighbors' groceries home in a wagon to earn spending money, which he used to see movies at the all-black Carver Theater. He also attended the concerts of Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Sarah Vaughan at the Howard Theatre during the 1940s. While in elementary school, Greene excelled in his classes, and worked to overcome his stutter. He went on to attend Francis L. Cardozo Senior High School, where he spent less time on his coursework, preferring to focus on his musical development. In the late 1940s, Greene performed in nightclubs with his quartet, The Melodaires, which included his brother, Arthur Greene; Mike Patterson; and Donald Palmer, who was eventually replaced by pianist Icky Tillman. Despite The Melodaires' success, Greene did not aspire to a professional singing career until later in life, when he joined the musical community in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Barry Farms (Washington, D.C.).

African American neighborhoods--Washington (D.C.).

African American students--Washington (D.C.).

African American theater--History--20th century.

Education, Elementary.

Video Oral History Interview with Everett Greene, Section A2007_327_001_004, TRT: 0:31:12 ?

Everett Greene grew up during World War II, and once saw President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in a parade down his street in the Barry Farm neighborhood of Washington, D.C. During the war, food and other essentials were rationed, and Greene's oldest brother, Lawrence Greene, served in the U.S. Navy. In Washington, D.C., Greene attended Francis L. Cardozo Senior High School, where his classmates included baseball player Maury Willis and several members of The Clovers. During this time, Greene sang at his classmates' parties with his quartet, The Melodaires. Upon graduating in 1952, Greene enlisted in the newly integrated U.S. Marine Corps, where he experienced racial discrimination. He was deployed for thirteen months to Korea, where his company was mostly involved in airstrikes against naval targets. While overseas, he visited his brother, Arthur Greene, who was serving in the U.S. Army. Greene delisted in 1955. All seven of his brothers served in the U.S. military, and none were killed or injured.

African American entertainers.

Race discrimination--United States--History.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Washington (D.C.).

African American soldiers--History.

Marines.

Discrimination.

Video Oral History Interview with Everett Greene, Section A2007_327_001_005, TRT: 0:29:28 ?

Everett Greene moved to Indianapolis, Indiana after returning from the Korean War in 1955. He initially planned to visit his mother, Lillian Lewis Greene, and return to Washington, D.C., but stayed in Indianapolis after obtaining work at the International Harvester Company's foundry. While there, he began singing with jazz guitarist Wes Montgomery in nightclubs like the Hub Bub, and eventually signed with a record company; but, due to unfair terms in his contract, soon stopped performing. He continued working in the foundry, and attended the 25th Street Baptist Church with his mother. Upon retiring in 1982, Greene joined Val Gray Ward's Kuumba Theater Company in Chicago, Illinois, and performed opposite folk singer Odetta Gordon in 'The Little Dreamer.' He also renewed his singing career in Chicago's nightclubs. During this time, Greene frequently returned to Indianapolis to visit his wife, Elmira Lawson Greene; and sons, including Marcellus Greene, who later played for the Minnesota Vikings football team.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans--History.

African American theater--Illinois--Chicago--History--20th century.

African American churches--Indiana--Indianapolis.

Black theater.

African American actors.

Marriage.

Video Oral History Interview with Everett Greene, Section A2007_327_001_006, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Everett Greene's mother moved to Indianapolis, Indiana while he was serving overseas in the U.S. military; and, upon his return to the United States, Greene settled there as well. In Indianapolis, Greene became a longstanding member of

the 25th Street Baptist Church, where his sister, Phyllis Greene Wyatt, directed the music program. He also performed in nightclubs with jazz guitarist Wes Montgomery during the 1950s and 1960s. Around this time, Greene witnessed Indianapolis' civil rights demonstrations, which were led by activists like Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Reverend Jesse L. Jackson. Greene describes his vocal range, and remembers transitioning from singing bass in a quartet to singing as a soloist. He retrained his voice several times during his career, in order to sing genres like gospel, jazz and blues. Greene, who continued performing at the time of the interview, also describes his strategies for preserving his voice.

African Americans--Religion.

African Americans--Social life and customs--Indiana--Indianapolis.

African American families--Indiana--Indianapolis.

African American musicians--Indiana--Indianapolis.

African American families--Washington (D.C.).

African American churches.

Gospel music.

Divorce.

Video Oral History Interview with Everett Greene, Section A2007_327_001_007, TRT: 0:30:31 ?

Everett Greene sang in the all-black nightclubs on Indiana Avenue in Indianapolis, Indiana from 1955 to 1962. During this time, he performed alongside such jazz musicians as Willis Kirk, Erroll Grandy, Freddie Hubbard and David Baker. Greene, who also worked at a steel foundry, joined several unions during his career, including a musicians' union and the United Automobile Workers. He joined the Screen Actors Guild in 1997, upon being cast as a Pullman porter in the film 'Going All the Way.' Greene independently recorded and distributed his first album, 'At Last,' in 1994. Four years later, he signed a contract with producer Houston Person to record his second album, 'My Foolish Heart.' In 2000, Greene began his career as a cruise singer, performing in the Jazz Party at Sea on the Norwegian Cruise Line. He was also featured as a singer on the Buselli-Wallarab Jazz Orchestra's album in 2002, after the vocalist he recommended was unable to complete the recording sessions.

Actors--United States.

African American singers.

African Americans in the performing arts--United States.

African American actors.

Voice-overs.

Jazz singers.

Video Oral History Interview with Everett Greene, Section A2007_327_001_008, TRT: 0:31:14 ?

Everett Greene performed in 'Show Boat' in 1989 at the Beef and Boards Dinner Theatre in Indianapolis, Indiana. In addition to his stage acting career, Greene had a number of voiceover credits. At the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, he provided the voice of Reverend Greene in an exhibit about the griots of Africa. He also narrated audio book adaptations of Rudyard Kipling's 'The Elephant's Child,' and Emily Crocker and John Jacobson's 'A Tree in Tappen Wood.' In 2007, Greene gave a concert in Cape May, New Jersey with pianist Marvin Chandler, who was also a minister. He describes his vocal and performance style, as well as his reviews, in which his voice was compared to that of Billy Eckstine and Paul Robeson. Greene also shares his advice to young

people, and reflects upon his values, his life and legacy, and how he would like to be remembered.

African Americans in the performing arts.

Voice-overs--Vocational guidance.

African American actors.

Jazz--1991-2000.

Jazz singers.

African American gospel singers.