

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Mary Shy Scott

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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>	Scott, Mary Shy, 1930-2013
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Mary Shy Scott,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 24, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:23:49).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Association chief executive and elementary school music teacher Mary Shy Scott (1930 - 2013 ) was the 23rd International President of Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority. Under Scott's leadership, AKA established the first non-military World War II veterans' memorial at Pearl Harbor, dedicated to the unsung hero, Doris Miller. She used her position to expand the sorority's headquarters, to establish an international chapter in London, and to promote reading in a national campaign with the Library of Congress. She was also a motivational speaker. Scott was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 24, 2008, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_026
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The 23rd International President of Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority, Inc., Mary Shy Scott was born on July 19, 1930, in Atlanta, Georgia, to Robert Shy and Flora Spearman Shy. Under Scott's leadership, the AKA Sorority initiated an

international chapter in London, England; established a non-military memorial to World War II veterans; helped to encourage reading through a partnership with the Library of Congress; and completed the building of an addition to the national headquarters.

Raised in Atlanta where she attended public elementary and high schools, Scott went on to enroll at Spelman College, where she graduated with her B.A. degree. In 1953, Scott was initiated into the Kappa Omega Chapter of the AKA Sorority. She continued her education by earning her M.A. degree from New York University. Afterwards, she completed her post graduate work in the humanities at New York University and Georgia State University, where she became certified in supervision and administration.

From 1982 to 1984, Scott served as the regional director of the Atlanta branch of the AKA Sorority. Later, in 1986, Scott became the first Anti-Basileus elect at the Boulé in Detroit, Michigan. In 1990, Scott was elected as the 23rd International President of AKA Sorority, Inc., at the Boulé in Richmond, Virginia. As international president, Scott was instrumental in the first non-military memorial to World War II veterans at Pearl Harbor, dedicated to the unsung hero, Doris Miller. She also completed the building and financing of the third story addition to the AKA Sorority national headquarters. Then, in 1992, Scott used her position to establish an international chapter in London, England, which existed until 2006. During her administration, she formed a partnership with the Library of Congress in a national campaign to promote reading. She also renewed the AKA Cleveland Job Corps contract.

Aside from her leadership roles in the AKA Sorority, Scott has worked as an educator, elementary school music specialist and motivational speaker. She has received many awards and recognitions including the Prominent American Personality Award from the President of the Republic of Benin. In 1990, Scott received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Miles College in Birmingham, Alabama.

Mary Scott passed away on April 15, 2013.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Mary Shy Scott was conducted by Denise Gines on February 24, 2008, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Association chief executive and elementary school music teacher Mary Shy Scott (1930 - 2013 ) was the 23rd International President of

Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority. Under Scott's leadership, AKA established the first non-military World War II veterans' memorial at Pearl Harbor, dedicated to the unsung hero, Doris Miller. She used her position to expand the sorority's headquarters, to establish an international chapter in London, and to promote reading in a national campaign with the Library of Congress. She was also a motivational speaker.

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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:**

Scott, Mary Shy, 1930-2013

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

**Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Scott, Mary Shy, 1930-2013--Interviews

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African American Greek letter societies--Interviews

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African American women executives--Interviews

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African American women teachers--Interviews

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Motivational speakers--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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Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

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**Occupations:**

Elementary School Music Teacher

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Association Chief Executive

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**HistoryMakers® Category:**

EducationMakers|CivicMakers

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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 Mary Shy Scott, February 24, 2008. 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).

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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 Mary Shy Scott, Section  
A2008\_026\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:41 2008/02/24

Mary Shy Scott was born on July 19, 1930 in Atlanta, Georgia. From an early age, Shy Scott was an active member of the African Methodist Episcopal church, and acted as president of the church board. She later became a

music teacher in Atlanta Public Schools, and joined the Kappa Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA). Shy Scott was mentored by former supreme basileus Margaret Davis Bowen, who encouraged her to obtain leadership positions. Shy Scott served as president of Kappa Omega Chapter, and was eventually elected as supreme basileus of the national sorority. During her tenure, Shy Scott developed the Creative Strategies for Action program, which focused on health, economic and family issues around the world. She also oversaw the construction of the Ivy Center, the sorority's headquarters in Chicago, Illinois. Although they were given fifteen years to pay off the mortgage on the building, the sorority settled the debt two years after its completion, with money raised at the 1994 boulevards.

African American women executives--Interviews.

African American women teachers--Interviews.

Motivational speakers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Mary Shy Scott, Section  
A2008\_026\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:08 2008/02/24

Mary Shy Scott was born in Atlanta, Georgia to Flora Spearman Shy and Robert Shy, Sr. Shy Scott's maternal grandmother had Cherokee heritage while her maternal grandfather was the son of a white plantation owner, who operated a cotton farm in Shady Dale, Georgia, where Shy Scott's mother were born and raised. Shy Scott often visited her grandmother, who encouraged her to play the piano at Allen Temple A.M.E. Church in Atlanta. As an adult, Shy Scott was elected supreme basileus of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA), and her accomplishments included paying off the mortgage of the Ivy Center in Chicago, Illinois. During her tenure, the sorority also grew its membership nationally and internationally. Shy Scott reflects upon her legacy at the sorority, including the initiations of her daughter, Alfredene Scott Benson, and granddaughters. She also describes her hopes for the sorority and its continued service and sisterhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Mary Shy Scott, Section  
A2008\_026\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:27 2008/02/24

Mary Shy Scott's father, Robert Shy, Sr., was born in

Newnan, Georgia. His mother, Mattie Shy, was an early graduate of Paine College in Augusta, Georgia while his father, Willie Shy, was a farmer and church organist. Shy Scott's mother, Flora Spearman Shy, attended high school in Shady Dale, Georgia, and completed teacher's training in Augusta, Georgia. After Shy Scott's parents married, they moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and settled in Atlanta, Georgia. Shy Scott's father worked as a truck driver for the City of Atlanta, while her mother stayed home with Shy Scott and her siblings, Robert Shy, Jr. and Doris Shy Frazier. They lived in Summerhill, a close-knit African American neighborhood, and were members of the nearby Allen Temple A.M.E. Church, where Shy Scott was a Girl Scout. She attended Edwin P. Johnson Elementary School, until her family moved to the Grady Homes housing project. She then attended David T. Howard Elementary School, where she was supported by teachers despite a lack of textbooks.

Video Oral History Interview with Mary Shy Scott, Section  
A2008\_026\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:00 2008/02/24

Mary Shy Scott moved to the Grady Homes housing project in Atlanta, Georgia when her father, Robert Shy, Sr., realized their home in the Summerhill neighborhood would soon be destroyed to build the Capitol Homes for white residents. She then attended David T. Howard Elementary School. In Atlanta, Shy Scott often encountered segregation, and she later supported Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s movement in the city. Shy Scott took private piano and organ lessons from Bessie Maddox throughout her childhood, and eventually was paid to play the organ at Allen Temple A.M.E. Church. During World War II, Shy Scott's father, maternal uncle, J.C. Spearman, and brother, Robert Shy, Jr., were drafted into the U.S. Army. Upon graduating from Booker T. Washington High School in 1946, Shy Scott enrolled at Spelman College in Atlanta. That summer, she moved to Brooklyn, New York to study ballet at Brooklyn School of Dance.

Video Oral History Interview with Mary Shy Scott, Section  
A2008\_026\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:33 2008/02/24

Mary Shy Scott met dance company director Alvin Ailey

while studying ballet and tap at Brooklyn School of Dance in New York City. She experienced the racism of the North while in New York City, and also in Washington, D.C. during a visit with her cousin. She returned to Atlanta, Georgia, and matriculated at Spelman College, where she studied music and English. She also joined the glee club, which was directed by Willis Laurence James, and became the assistant organist during class and assemblies. She also studied under violinist Kemper Harreld. Upon graduation in 1950, she was hired by Atlanta Public Schools superintendent, Bazoline E. Usher, who had been Shy Scott's principal at David T. Howard Elementary School. Shy Scott was assigned to Davis Street School, followed by Wesley Avenue School. She then joined Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA) upon the recommendation of her Spelman professors, and became active in the organization. She recalls meeting her husband, Alfred Scott, Sr.