

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Edith Irby Jones

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jones, Edith Irby, 1927-2019
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Edith Irby Jones,
Dates:	March 10, 2008 and May 10, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2008 and 2010
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:13:23).
Abstract:	Internal medicine physician Dr. Edith Irby Jones (1927 -) integrated the University of Arkansas College of Medicine in 1950. In addition to practicing medicine, Jones served as president of the National Medical Association and on the faculty of the Baylor College of Medicine. Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 10, 2008 and May 10, 2010, in Houston, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_041
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Pioneering medical physician Dr. Edith Irby Jones was born on December 23, 1927 to Mattie Buice Irby, a maid, and Robert Irby, a farmer. As a child, Jones witnessed her older sister die due to a typhoid epidemic and was encouraged to pursue a career as a medical physician. She attended Langston Elementary School and Langston Secondary School both in Hot Springs, Arkansas. In 1944, Jones' high school teacher helped her obtain a scholarship to attend Knoxville College in Knoxville, Tennessee where she majored in chemistry, biology and physics. While

at Knoxville College, Jones was an active member of the Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society and was initiated into the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. In addition, Jones was a member of the debate team, pep squad, drama club and the YMCA.

In 1948, nine years before the “Little Rock Nine” integrated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, Jones became the first African American admitted to the University of Arkansas College of Medicine. Although she was not provided with the same housing, dining or bathroom facilities as white students, Jones received support from her high school alumni, neighbors and a black-owned local newspaper, *The Arkansas State-Press*. Afterwards, she received an internship at the University Hospital in Little Rock. In Arkansas, Jones practiced medicine and worked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Civil Rights Movement before moving with her family to Texas in 1958. In 1959, Jones began her residency in internal medicine at Baylor College of Medicine Affiliated Hospitals, but the hospital that she was assigned to segregated her, limiting her patient rosters. She completed the last months of her residency at Freedman’s Hospital in Washington, D.C., and in 1963, she received an academic appointment as a clinical assistant professor of medicine at the Baylor College of Medicine.

On May 4, 1979, Jones’ achievements were recognized by the State of Arkansas, and she was honored with the founding of the annual celebration of Edith Irby Jones Day. That following year, she became a founding member of the Association of Black Cardiologists Incorporated. In 1985, Jones became the first woman to be elected president of the National Medical Association, and in 1986, she led the United States Task Force on Health to Haiti where the medical and healthcare infrastructure were examined and potential solutions for the impoverished nation were explored.

In 1997, the Edith Irby Jones M.D. Hospital was opened in Houston, Texas. Later, in 2001, Jones was named in *Black Enterprise* Magazine’s selection of 101 leading black physicians in America. She has received numerous awards and recognitions for her contributions to the medical field and the American Civil Rights Movement including: the Sinkler Miller Medical Association National Achievement Award, Kato Models Woman of the Year Award, Pioneer Award from the Student National Medical Association, Mickey Leland Certificate of Congressional Award, Bennett College Belle Ringer Image Award and the Oscar E. Edwards Memorial Award for Volunteers.

Jones was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 10, 2008.

Jones passed away on July 15, 2019.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Edith Irby Jones was conducted by Denise Gines on March 10, 2008 and May 10, 2010, in Houston, Texas, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Internal medicine physician Dr. Edith Irby Jones (1927 -) integrated the University of Arkansas College of Medicine in 1950. In addition to practicing medicine, Jones served as president of the National Medical Association and on the faculty of the Baylor College of Medicine.

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:

Jones, Edith Irby, 1927-2019

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jones, Edith Irby, 1927-2019--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Internal Medicine Physician

HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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 Dr. Edith Irby Jones, March 10, 2008 and May 10, 2010. 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 Dr. Edith Irby Jones, Section A2008_041_001_001, TRT: 0:28:40 2008/03/10

Dr. Edith Irby Jones was born on December 23, 1927 in Mayflower, Arkansas to Mattie Buice Irby and Robert Irby. Her paternal ancestors were freedmen, and moved from Virginia to Mayflower with their former owner, a teacher who was punished for instructing slaves alongside white children. Her maternal grandparents owned a farm in Mayflower, where Irby Jones' mother was born in 1900. After Irby Jones' maternal grandmother died, her mother was entrusted with the care of her sister and five brothers. Irby Jones' maternal grandfather, Ellis Buice, discouraged her mother from marrying young, but eventually supported her parents' relationship. Irby Jones' parents

raised four children in Mayflower, where her father worked as a sharecropper. He owned a wagon and a Ford Model T, which were repossessed by the S.C. Smith Company after he was killed by a horse. Irby Jones also recalls learning about her paternal family history from Dr. Robert Irby Wise, a physician from Williamsburg, Virginia.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Edith Irby Jones, Section A2008_041_001_002, TRT: 0:29:15 2008/03/10

Dr. Edith Irby Jones' father, Robert Irby, passed away when she was six years old, and her family then moved to Conway, Arkansas. There, her older sister, Juanita Irby, died of typhoid fever; and Irby Jones contracted rheumatic fever, which prevented her from attending school. Instead, her mother, Mattie Buice Irby, used her brother's textbooks to homeschool her. She was left in the care of her maternal grandfather while her mother worked as a domestic. Irby Jones eventually moved with her family to Hot Springs, Arkansas, which was known for its nightlife and gambling venues, like the Oaklawn Park Race Track. Irby Jones skipped the fourth grade, and joined the youth group and choir at Hot Springs' Union Baptist Church. She was mentored by her teachers at Hot Springs' Langston High School, including P.C. Miller and Margaret Long Martin, who encouraged her to attend a private university. She also served as the assistant secretary to John L. Webb, who was the grand master of Mississippi's Prince Hall Masons.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Edith Irby Jones, Section A2008_041_001_003, TRT: 0:30:10 2008/03/10

Dr. Edith Irby Jones grew up in Hot Springs, Arkansas, where she attended the Union Baptist Church and Langston High School. She aspired to become a physician after babysitting for a neighbor who was a doctor. Following her high school graduation, Irby Jones lived with the family of her maternal uncle, Chester Buice, in Chicago, Illinois, where she worked over the summer as a typist at the Chicago Mail Order Company. In the fall, she travelled to Knoxville College in Knoxville, Tennessee; and, upon arrival, discovered that she lacked the money for tuition. She matriculated with the help of college

president William Lloyd Imes, who offered Irby Jones a position in his office. During college, Irby Jones joined the cheerleading team and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Upon graduating in 1948, she returned to Chicago, where she enrolled in clinical psychology courses at Northwestern University, and applied to medical school. Irby Jones went on to integrate the University of Arkansas Medical School in Little Rock.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Edith Irby Jones, Section A2008_041_001_004, TRT: 0:27:05 2008/03/10

Dr. Edith Irby Jones integrated the University of Arkansas Medical School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1948. She initially lived with her maternal relatives in North Little Rock, Arkansas; and then moved to an apartment, where she often studied with her friends. Irby Jones befriended many of her white classmates, including Mary Arthur White, who drove her to school. Due to the mandatory segregation of public places, Irby Jones was given a private lunchroom and bathroom in the medical school library. During the summer after her first year, she met her husband, Professor James Beauregard Jones of the Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal College in Pine Bluff. Following her graduation in 1952, she completed a one-year medical internship, and then moved with her husband to her hometown of Hot Springs, Arkansas, where her former medical school dean, H. Clay Chenault, worked at a clinic. There, Irby Jones opened a general medical practice to serve the black community.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Edith Irby Jones, Section A2008_041_002_005, TRT: 0:30:03 ?

Dr. Edith Irby Jones integrated the University of Arkansas Medical School in Little Rock, Arkansas. While a student, she was involved in the Civil Rights Movement as a member of the Freedom Four with attorneys Bob Booker, Harold Flowers and Floyd Davis. She also befriended activist Daisy Bates. After completing her medical internship in 1953, Irby Jones was encouraged by her former dean, H. Clay Chenault, to return to her hometown of Hot Springs, Arkansas, where she opened a general practice. After six years, she moved to Houston, Texas, where her husband, James Beauregard Jones, joined the

faculty of Texas Southern University. In Houston, Irby Jones became the first African American female resident of the Baylor College of Medicine. She was assigned to the Houston Veterans Administration Hospital, and also spent three months at the Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Then, Irby Jones established a practice in Houston with help from a wealthy investor. She also had three children with her husband.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Edith Irby Jones, Section A2008_041_002_006, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Dr. Edith Irby Jones practiced general medicine in the Third Ward of Houston, Texas, where she served a diverse clientele. She had privileges at the Houston Methodist Hospital, St. Elizabeth Hospital and Hermann Hospital, where she was the first female and first black staff member. In 1972, she joined the faculty of Houston's Baylor College of Medicine, where she taught internal medicine. Following a national meeting of cardiologists, Irby Jones helped to found the Association of Black Cardiologists in 1980. Five years later, she became the president of the National Medical Association (NMA), where she previously served as chairwoman of the community health and internal medicine divisions. Irby Jones remembers Michael E. DeBakey, a noted cardiologist who supported her campaign. As president of the NMA, Irby Jones established regional meetings and increased the group's female membership. She also talks about the health benefits of hot springs, and the Civil Rights Movement in Houston.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Edith Irby Jones, Section A2008_041_002_007, TRT: 0:19:30 ?

Dr. Edith Irby Jones traveled to Haiti with a group of medical professionals for the first time in 1986. She talks about their humanitarian efforts there, including the establishment of the Dr. Edith Irby Jones Clinic in Vaudreuil, Haiti. At this point in the interview, Irby Jones describes her hopes for the Haitian people. In addition to her work abroad, Irby Jones was an advocate for education in underserved communities. She also talks about a hospital in Houston, Texas that was named in her honor. Irby Jones shares a message to future generations, and

concludes the interview by reflecting upon her legacy.