

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Rosalind Ashford Holmes

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Holmes, Rosalind, 1943-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Rosalind Ashford Holmes,
Dates:	June 8, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:24:32).
Abstract:	Singer Rosalind Ashford Holmes (1943 -) was a member of Martha and the Vandellas, famous for singles like “Dancing in the Street” and “Nowhere to Run.” In 1995, she was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Holmes was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 8, 2010, in Detroit, Michigan. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_050
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Singer Rosalind Holmes was born on September 2, 1943, to John and Mary Ashford in Detroit, Michigan, although her parents separated when she was very young. As a child, Holmes sang in church choirs and learned how to dance in local centers, and in high school, she sang in her glee club and mixed choir. In 1957, Ashford auditioned for Edward “Pops” Larkins at the local YWCA in Detroit. Larkins was in search of a new girl group to compliment his already established male group. Rosalind, along with Annette Beard, Gloria Williams, and Martha Reeves, became The Del-Phi’s; they performed at the YMCA, YWCA, high school functions, teas, lawn parties and private events. In 1961, The Del-Phi’s released “I’ll Let You Know” on the Chess Records label subsidiary Checkmate. The record was unpopular, and two follow up records also failed to bring attention to the group.

In 1962, Williams left the group, and the remaining trio became Marvin Gaye’s background singers on singles like “Stubborn Kind of Fellow” and “Hitch Hike.” In September of that same year, Motown president Berry Gordy signed Reeves and her background singing partners to the label as Martha and the Vandellas. Just one year later, "Come and Get These Memories" became the Vandellas’ first hit single, reaching number six on the Billboard R&B Singles Chart. A few months later, the Vandellas’ second hit, “(Love Is Like a) Heat Wave,” was released, peaking at number four on the Billboard Hot 100 and number one on the Billboard Hot R&B chart. In 1964, the group continued their success with perhaps their most famous single, "Dancing in the Street," which was soon followed by “Nowhere to Run” in 1965 and “Jimmy Mack” in 1967.

In 1968, Holmes left Martha and the Vandellas, married, and began a career with the Michigan Bell Telephone Company. Ten years later, she joined Reeves and Beard in a reunion performance, and then in 1989, the three original Vandellas recorded "Step Into My Shoes" for Motorcity Records. In 1995, Holmes was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame as member of Martha and the Vandellas. Holmes has one son, Damon, two granddaughters, Alana and Kaimen, and one grandson, Damon. She continues to perform today.

Rosalind Holmes was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 10, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Rosalind Ashford Holmes was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 8, 2010, in Detroit, Michigan, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Singer Rosalind Ashford Holmes (1943 -) was a member of Martha and the Vandellas, famous for singles like “Dancing in the Street” and “Nowhere to Run.” In 1995, she was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

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:

Holmes, Rosalind, 1943-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Holmes, Rosalind, 1943- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Martha and the Vandellas (Musical group)

Martha and the Vandellas (Musical group)

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 Rosalind Ashford Holmes, June 8, 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 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 Rosalind Ashford Holmes, Section A2010_050_001_001, TRT:

0:29:25 ?

Rosalind Ashford Holmes was born on September 2, 1943 in Detroit, Michigan to Mary Buckley Ashford and John Ashford, Sr. Her maternal grandparents, Crizel Buckley and Joseph Buckley, were sharecroppers in Laurel, Mississippi, where her mother was born and raised. Ashford Holmes' mother attended college in Laurel, and moved to Detroit with her father after her mother's death. Ashford Holmes' father was born in Lanett, Alabama to Nancy Ashford and Ervin Ashford, and moved as a teenager to Detroit. There, he found work with the Ford Motor Company, and met Ashford Holmes' mother. The couple married and raised three children, including Ashford Holmes, in the North End of Detroit. There, Ashford Holmes began her education at the St. George School. She did not aspire become a musician at the time, but enjoyed listening to popular artists like Dinah Washington, Etta James and Lloyd Price on her parents' Victrola record player.

Video Oral History Interview with Rosalind Ashford Holmes, Section A2010_050_001_002, TRT: 0:30:02 ?

Rosalind Ashford Holmes attended the St. George School and Harry B. Hutchins Intermediate School in Detroit, Michigan. She went on to study business at Wilbur Wright High School, a vocational school in Detroit's North End, where she also joined the choir and glee club. While in high school, Ashford Holmes joined The Del-Phis, a girl group managed by Edward Larkins and led by singer Gloria Williams. The Del-Phis eventually left Larkins to work with Fred Brown, who took them to Chicago, Illinois to record as the backup singers for J.J. Barnes on Chess Records. The group had little success as a solo act under Brown's management, and decided to sign a contract with the newly founded Motown Records, where one of their members, Martha Reeves, worked as a secretary. The Del-Phis began their career at Motown Records as Marvin Gaye's backup singers on tracks like 'Stubborn Kind of Fellow,' and then began touring with the Motortown Revue, which included acts like The Temptations and The Supremes.

Video Oral History Interview with Rosalind Ashford Holmes, Section A2010_050_001_003, TRT: 0:30:07 ?

Rosalind Ashford Holmes performed in nightclubs like the 20 Grand in Detroit, Michigan as a member of The Del-Phis. After the group signed with Motown Records, they were renamed Martha and the Vandellas. During the early 1960s, the group toured the segregated South with the Motortown Revue, and experienced both fanfare and racial discrimination from southern whites. In 1963, Martha and the Vandellas released their first hit song, 'Come and Get These Memories.' After this success, the band performed as a solo act at venues like the Copacabana in New York City, and recorded more hit singles including 'Heat Wave' and 'Jimmy Mack,' which was written by the team of Holland Dozier Holland. Ashford Holmes and the other members of Martha and the Vandellas also toured in Europe with Motown Records acts like The Supremes and the Temptations, and recorded a live television special with British performer Dusty Springfield.

Video Oral History Interview with Rosalind Ashford Holmes, Section A2010_050_001_004, TRT: 0:29:13 ?

Rosalind Ashford Holmes left Martha and the Vandellas in 1968, after being told by Motown Records' management that she was no longer welcome in the group. She then found work as a senior clerk at the Michigan Bell Telephone Company. After leaving Motown Records, Ashford Holmes was denied the royalties for the songs she recorded, and sued Motown Records with help from

the Artists Rights Enforcement Corporation. After winning the case, Ashford Holmes and her former bandmate, Annette Beard, were forced to sue the Artists Rights Enforcement Corporation for garnishing 50 percent of their royalty payments. During the 1980s, Ashford Holmes and Beard periodically reunited with Martha Reeves to perform as Martha and the Vandellas, until deciding to form their own group, which they named The Original Vandellas. Ashford Holmes also joined the Motown Legends Gospel Choir with former Motown artists from groups like The Miracles and The Contours.

Video Oral History Interview with Rosalind Ashford Holmes, Section A2010_050_001_005, TRT: 0:10:00 ?

Rosalind Ashford Holmes talks about popular music at the time of the interview, and shares her advice for aspiring music professionals. She also describes her concerns for the African American community and her hopes for the City of Detroit. Ashford Holmes reflects upon her life and the importance of family, and concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Rosalind Ashford Holmes, Section A2010_050_001_006, TRT: 0:15:45 ?

Rosalind Ashford Holmes narrates her photographs.