

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Chrystine Ramsey Shack

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Shack, Ethel Chrystine, 1926-2010
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Chrystine Ramsey Shack,
Dates:	July 26, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:39:03).
Abstract:	Education executive and civic leader Chrystine Ramsey Shack (1926 - 2010) was a member of the Project Matterhorn team at the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory and has served in several executive positions for the national organization, The Girl Friends, Inc. Shack was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 26, 2010, in Memphis, Tennessee. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_087
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator Chrystine Ramsey Shack was born on November 18, 1926 in Memphis, Tennessee. She attended The College of New Jersey where she received her B.A. degree and earned elementary education certification. She continued her education at Rider College in New Jersey where she received her M.A. degree.

In 1952, Shack became a document custodian for Project Matterhorn B, a magnetic fusion research project under the direction of Lyman Spitzer, Jr. at the

Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory. Shack was in charge of filing and transferring top secret documents at the laboratory. After Project Matterhorn, Shack went back to school to earn her Ph.D. from Rutgers University in New Jersey. In the late 1960's, Shack began working for the New Jersey State Department of Education in Trenton. She then moved to Michigan where she worked in the Department of Vocational Education in Lansing. While in Michigan, Shack contributed a chapter to a publication funded by the Michigan Business Education Association on business curriculum. In 1981, she was named president of Highland Park Community College and was the first woman president of a community college in Michigan.

Shack has served in several capacities as a leader of The Girl Friends, Inc. including as national secretary, parliamentarian, national advisory board chair, president of the Girl Friends' fund, national budget chair, and national president in 1978. She was profiled in the book *They Made It – So Can You*, showcasing her career development and was the subject of a senate concurrent resolution praising her academic accomplishments in 1981. She also served on several business associations including the United Business Education Association and chaired their Consumer Economics board.

Chrystine Shack was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 24, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Chrystine Ramsey Shack was conducted by Ronald Mickens on July 26, 2010, in Memphis, Tennessee, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Education executive and civic leader Chrystine Ramsey Shack (1926 - 2010) was a member of the Project Matterhorn team at the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory and has served in several executive positions for the national organization, The Girl Friends, Inc.

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:

Shack, Ethel Chrystine, 1926-2010

Mickens, Ronald (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Shack, Ethel Chrystine, 1926-2010--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civic Leader

Education Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|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 Chrystine Ramsey Shack, July 26, 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 Chrystine Ramsey Shack, Section A2010_087_001_001, TRT: 0:28:25 2010/07/26

Chrystine Ramsey Shack was born on November 18, 1926 in Memphis, Tennessee to DeLocha Perkins Herron and Royal Ramsey. Her paternal family were natives of Tennessee, while her maternal relatives were migrants from Mississippi. Her maternal grandfather worked for the Illinois Central Railroad, and ran a grocery store in Memphis with his wife, Shack's maternal grandmother Carrie Bailey Perkins. Together, they raised Shack's mother, who graduated from the Kortrecht Intermediate School and the Henderson Business College in Memphis, and went on to teach at both schools. When Shack was young, her parents separated, and her mother later remarried. Her mother also served as the pianist at the Rock of Ages Baptist Church, Bethlehem Baptist Church and Salem Gilfield Baptist Church, where she was accompanied by Shack every Sunday. Shack began her education at the Florida Street School in Memphis, and often spent time with her maternal grandmother.

Video Oral History Interview with Chrystine Ramsey Shack, Section A2010_087_001_002, TRT: 0:30:34 2010/07/26

Chrystine Ramsey Shack grew up in a middle class household in Memphis, Tennessee, where her maternal grandfather, Brooks Perkins, owned a grocery store and drayage business at the Central Illinois Railroad station. Because of her strict upbringing, Shack had few playmates, and spent much of her time practicing piano with her mother, DeLocha Perkins Herron. She began her education at the Florida Street School, and went on to attend Booker T. Washington High School, where she joined the drum and bugle corps and the academic honor

society. Her older brother, Herschel Ramsey, studied at Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, and left school to serve in the U.S. military during World War II. Upon graduating from high school, Shack was ranked fourth in her class, and travelled to Wilberforce, Ohio, where she secured admission to Wilberforce University on the basis of her strong grades. She decided to study business because of the influence of her mother, who worked as a business teacher in Memphis.

Video Oral History Interview with Chrystine Ramsey Shack, Section A2010_087_001_003, TRT: 0:36:20 2010/07/26

Chrystine Ramsey Shack attended Wilberforce University, an African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) school in Wilberforce, Ohio. There, she met her future husband, Arthur Shack; and worked in the bursar's office. After graduating, Shack accepted a secretarial position at the Hampton Institute in Virginia. She then joined her husband in New Jersey, where she worked as the secretary to the superintendent of the Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth. Shack went on to be selected to serve as the secretary in a top secret physics laboratory at Princeton University. Additionally, Shack remembers her graduation from Wilberforce University in 1947, when she participated in a demonstration against A.M.E. Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom, who wanted to fire university president Charles H. Wesley. The protest led to the split between Wilberforce University, which continued to be affiliated with the A.M.E. church; and Central State College, where Charles H. Wesley became the founding president.

Video Oral History Interview with Chrystine Ramsey Shack, Section A2010_087_001_004, TRT: 0:30:27 2010/07/26

Chrystine Ramsey Shack worked for two years as a secretary at Project Matterhorn, a top secret nuclear fusion research laboratory at Princeton University. She was one of five female employees, and handled files for project director Lyman Spitzer, as well as physicists John Archibald Wheeler, James Van Allen, J. Robert Oppenheimer, James L. Tuck and Edward Teller. She left to teach at an elementary school in Trenton, New Jersey, and then became a business instructor at Hamilton High

School East in Hamilton Township, New Jersey, where her husband, Arthur Shack, taught at Hamilton High School West. Shack completed a master's degree in vocational education from Rider College while teaching night classes at Mercer Community College, and then earned her Ph.D. degree at Rutgers University. After her husband accepted a job in Michigan, she became the president of Highland Park Community College in Highland Park, Michigan, and then worked part time at Michigan State University in East Lansing.

Video Oral History Interview with Chrystine Ramsey Shack, Section A2010_087_001_005, TRT: 0:26:03 2010/07/26

Chrystine Ramsey Shack became a member of The Girl Friends Inc. while living in New Jersey. In 1976, she was chosen to serve as a parliamentarian at the organization's national meeting, and later rose to become the national president of The Girl Friends Fund. After her presidency, Shack remained on the advisory board of The Girl Friends Inc. Her husband, Arthur Shack, was a member of the Boy Friends, a group for partners of the Girl Friends. In the mid-1970s, Shack and her husband relocated to Detroit, Michigan, where she served as the vice president and then president of Highland Park Community College. Her husband was active with Shriners International, and she edited 'History of the Shrine, 1893–1993,' a two-volume monograph by Joseph A. Walkes, Jr. on the history of black Shriners. Additionally, Shack reflects upon her life and legacy, and talks about her family. She concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Chrystine Ramsey Shack, Section A2010_087_001_006, TRT: 0:07:14 2010/07/26

Chrystine Ramsey Shack narrates her photographs.