

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Linnaeus Dorman

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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>	Dorman, Linnaeus
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Linnaeus Dorman,
<b>Dates:</b>	October 24, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 MOV HD video files (2:40:02).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Chemist Linnaeus Dorman (1935 - ) has twenty-six inventions and patents in organic chemistry and biomaterials. He also served as a research chemist at the Dow Chemical Company. Dorman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 24, 2012, in Midland, Michigan. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_174
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Organic chemist and inventor Linnaeus Dorman was born on June 28, 1935 in Orangeburg, South Carolina to schoolteachers John Albert Dorman, Sr. and Georgia Hammond. He and his twin brother, James are the youngest of five siblings. Raised in the Jim Crow South, his parents sent him to the historically black South Carolina State College laboratory school. The state college afforded him a better education than he would have received otherwise and nurtured his nascent interest in science. As a child, Dorman became fascinated with his friend's chemistry set and the idea of creating new things. When he entered Wilkinson High School in 1948, his teachers immediately recognized his natural talent in science and encouraged him to take more science courses. This led him to declare chemistry as his undergraduate major after he graduated from high school.

In the fall of 1952, Dorman enrolled at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. Because his father was a World War I veteran, having served in France, Dorman received a scholarship from the small, private institution and its scholarship program for the children of World War I veterans. After receiving his B.S. degree in chemistry in 1956, Dorman enrolled in the organic chemistry Ph.D. program at Indiana University. During the summers, he traveled back to Peoria, where he gained invaluable research experience as a chemist for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) at the Northern Regional Research Laboratory. In 1961, he earned his Ph.D. degree and took a position as a research chemist at the Dow Chemical Company in Midland, Michigan.

While Dorman has garnered a reputation for publishing many research articles in premier research journals, he has become most known for creating over twenty inventions and patents in organic chemistry and biomaterials. Many of his earliest patents involve synthesis methods in organic chemistry. In 1985, he invented a chemical compound that functioned as an absorbent that removed formaldehyde from the air. In 1992, Dorman invented a calcium phosphate biomaterial that was used in hard tissue prosthetics such as bone prosthetics in 1992. Between 1992 and 1993, he developed a new process for the controlled release of herbicides, this method became critical to crop rotation.

He joined the American Chemical Society (ACS) in 1957 and served in a number of administrative positions such as secretary, councilor, and director. Named Inventor of the Year by Dow Chemical Company in 1983, Dorman has been credited with over twenty inventions and patents in organic chemistry and biomaterials. He received the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers' most prestigious award, the Percy C. Julian Award in 1992. Although he retired in 2000, Dorman continues to work in the scientific community as a mentor. He and his wife, Thae live in Michigan and have two children, Evelyn and John.

Linnaeus Dorm was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 24, 2012.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Linnaeus Dorman was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 24, 2012, in Midland, Michigan, and was recorded on 6 MOV HD video files. Chemist Linnaeus Dorman (1935 - ) has twenty-six inventions and patents in organic chemistry and biomaterials. He also served as a research chemist at the Dow Chemical Company.

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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:

Dorman, Linnaeus

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Dorman, Linnaeus--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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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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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 Linnaeus Dorman, October 24, 2012. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/22/2013 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, October 24, 2012**

Video Oral History Interview with Linnaeus Dorman, Section A2012\_174\_001\_001, TRT: 1:31:55  
2012/10/24

Linnaeus Dorman was born in 1935 in Orangeburg, South Carolina, as the youngest of five children. His mother, Georgia Hammond, was born at the turn of the twentieth century, into a prominent family of land-owners in Ridge Spring, South Carolina. Georgia Hammond graduated from college and spent her career as an elementary school teacher. Dorman's father, John Dorman, Sr., was also born around the turn of the twentieth century, and served in World War I. After the war, he attended South Carolina State College in Orangeburg, and graduated in 1925. John Dorman, Sr. worked as a school teacher for a few years, and then moved on to a better-paying job at a naval shipyard in Charleston, South Carolina, before settling down into a career as a handyman at South Carolina State College. During his time at South Carolina State, John Dorman, Sr. took graduate-level courses under George Washington Carver.

African American families--South Carolina.

African American educators--South Carolina.

World War, 1914-1918--Participation, African American.

African Americans--Education--South Carolina.

Carver, George Washington, 1864?-1943.

Video Oral History Interview with Linnaeus Dorman, Section A2012\_174\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:12  
2012/10/24

Linnaeus Dorman describes his childhood and schooling in Orangeburg, South Carolina. In 1940, Dorman began elementary school at Middle Branch School under his mother, Georgia Hammond's tutelage. In 1941, he moved to Felton Training School, a laboratory school at South Carolina State College. Dorman became fascinated with chemistry and mathematics at an early age, and excelled at school. As a young adult, Dorman was deeply provoked by the institution of segregation, and rose to the challenge by striving to excel academically and assuming leadership roles in extracurricular activities. Influenced by a program that aimed to encourage African American students to attend integrated universities in the North, Dorman applied to attend Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. He received a scholarship to attend Bradley, and in the fall of 1952, began studies for his bachelor's degree.

Childhood--South Carolina--Orangeburg--1930-1950.

Education, Elementary--South Carolina.

Segregation in education--United States.

Bradley University.

Video Oral History Interview with Linnaeus Dorman, Section A2012\_174\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:44  
2012/10/24

Linnaeus Dorman describes his experience in college and graduate school. In 1952, Dorman began college at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. At Bradley, Dorman befriended Robert Lawrence, Jr., who later became known as the first African American astronaut. Dorman earned his B.S. degree in chemistry in 1956, and spent that summer as a researcher at the United States Department of Agriculture's Northern Regional Research Laboratory (now called the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research) in Peoria. Encouraged by his mentor John Shoyer, Dorman pursued his Ph.D. in organic chemistry at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. His dissertation research was focused on heterocyclic compounds, and he continued to spend his summers at the Northern Regional Research Laboratory. Dorman married Thae Hubble in 1958, and the couple had their first child in 1959. Dorman earned his Ph.D. degree in 1961, and went on to work at the Dow Chemical Company in Midland, Ohio.

Bradley University.  
African American astronauts.  
National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (U.S.).  
Chemistry--Study and teaching (Higher).  
Dow Chemical Company.

Video Oral History Interview with Linnaeus Dorman, Section A2012\_174\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:23  
2012/10/24

Linnaeus Dorman describes his career at Dow Chemical Company in Midland, Ohio. After completing his doctoral research in 1960 at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, Dorman was recruited by Dow Chemical Company, and moved to the predominantly white community of Midland. As Midland gradually began to integrate, Dorman and his wife decided to settle down there. Dorman worked on several projects during his career at Dow. He also received patents for a number of his inventions. His most significant contributions are in the synthesis of pharmaceutical compounds, artificial bone material and thermoplastic elastomers. In 1985, Dorman received Dow Chemical's 'Inventor of the Year' award for his invention of mineral-filled prosthetic materials.

Dow Chemical Company.  
Indiana University.  
Husband and wife--Ohio.  
Chemistry, Organic--Patents.

Video Oral History Interview with Linnaeus Dorman, Section A2012\_174\_001\_005, TRT: 5:27:01  
2012/10/24

Linnaeus Dorman reflects upon his legacy and how he wants to be remembered. Dorman's legacy lies in having built a career that proved that people of color could contribute as significantly as everybody else. He hopes to be remembered as a person who worked hard to succeed in spite of the challenges. Dorman urges the African American youth to seek an education, and use it to build their lives. As is typical of a career in science, Dorman faced disappointments over the course of his laboratory-based career. He overcame his scientific frustrations by becoming deeply involved in his community.

African Americans--Education.  
Science--Vocational guidance--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Linnaeus Dorman, Section A2012\_174\_001\_006, TRT: 6:13:47  
2012/10/24

Linnaeus Dorman describes his photographs.  
Photographs.