

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Mollie Belt

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Belt, Mollie Finch, 1943-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Mollie Belt,
Dates:	January 29, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:42:53).
Abstract:	Newspaper publishing chief executive Mollie Belt (1943 -) , daughter of Dallas Examiner founder Fred J. Finch, Jr., has been CEO and publisher of the Dallas Examiner since 1997. Belt was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 29, 2013, in Dallas, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_023
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Newspaper CEO and publisher Mollie Finch-Belt was born on August 7, 1943 in Dallas, Texas. Finch-Belt's mother, Mildred, was a mathematics instructor; her father, Fred J. Finch, Jr., founded the *Dallas Examiner* in 1986. But after publishing only one issue, Belt's mother and father were murdered in their home. In 1961, Finch-Belt graduated from Lincoln High School in Dallas, Texas. After briefly attending Spelman College, she enrolled at the University of Denver where she graduated with her B.A. degree in sociology and psychology in 1965. Upon graduation, Finch-Belt began working as an employment counselor for the Texas Employment Commission. She then held positions in the Harris County

Manpower Program and for City of Dallas where she administered the Title IV program. Between 1977 and 1997, Finch-Belt was a branch chief in the Civil Rights Compliance Department for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In 1997, Finch-Belt and her husband, attorney James C. Belt, Jr., invested their personal resources to revitalize the *Dallas Examiner*. In 1998, with a grant from AT&T, she started *Future Speak*, a publication aimed at developing young minority journalists. Finch-Belt has also used the *Dallas Examiner* to increase HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention by publishing numerous articles and supplements, including “PROBE,” “Battling AIDS in Our Community” (2003) and “Innocence Lost” (2004). Finch-Belt also hosted public programs such as an HIV/AIDS town hall meeting at the Inspiring Body of Christ Church in Dallas, Texas. She also co-hosted the Youth Angle luncheon on World AIDS Day with Paul Quinn College. Since assuming editorial responsibilities of the *Dallas Examiner*, Finch-Belt has continued her father’s dream of providing the Dallas African American community with its own news service.

Finch-Belt is a member of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She has led the the *Dallas Examiner* to win numerous national, state and local awards, including the prestigious Katie Awards. The *Dallas Examiner* was named “Best Weekly Newspaper” in 2002 by the Texas Publisher’s Association awarded; and, in 2004, it received twelve awards from the regional chapter of National Association of Black Journalists, including “Best Newspaper” and “Best Practices.”

Finch-Belt lives in Dallas with her husband, attorney James C. Belt, Jr. They have two children, James C. Belt, III, advertising manager at the *Dallas Examiner*, and Melanie Belt, M.D.

Mollie Finch-Belt was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 29, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Mollie Belt was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 29, 2013, in Dallas, Texas, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Newspaper publishing chief executive Mollie Belt (1943 -), daughter of Dallas Examiner founder Fred J. Finch, Jr., has been CEO and publisher of the Dallas Examiner since 1997.

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:

Belt, Mollie Finch, 1943-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Belt, Mollie Finch, 1943---Interviews

African American newspaper editors--Texas--Dallas--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Newspaper Publishing Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Mollie Belt, January 29, 2013. 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 Mollie Belt, Section
A2013_023_001_001, TRT: 1:28:16 2013/01/29

Mollie Finch Belt describes her family's background. Her mother, Mildred Newton Finch, was born in Marshall, Texas, on February 28, 1923. Belt's maternal grandfather, Andrew Newton Finch, finished college and became a Methodist minister whose specialty was building Methodist churches around Texas. He later served on the Board of Trustees at Wiley College, where both of Belt's parents graduated. Belt's father, Fred J. Finch Jr., was born in Dallas, Texas, on May 3, 1922. Belt recalls that her father attended Booker T. Washington High School and received a basketball scholarship to attend Wiley College. Belt describes her childhood experiences with segregation in Tuskegee, Alabama, where her father was stationed in the Air Force. After World War II, Belt's family moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts where her father attended Harvard Law School. After her father graduated, the family returned to Dallas, Texas, where Belt's father started his own law practice.

African American families--Texas.

Wiley College (Marshall, Tex.).

Childhood and youth.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

Segregation--Alabama--Tuskegee.

Harvard Law School.

African American lawyers--Texas--Dallas.

Video Oral History Interview with Mollie Belt, Section
A2013_023_001_002, TRT: 2:29:37 2013/01/29

Mollie Finch Belt lived in Tuskegee, Alabama until her father was accepted into Harvard Law School. She describes the segregation of Tuskegee and her family's move to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where her father attended Harvard Law School. Belt describes her school experiences there and frequenting the library with her mother every Saturday. Belt also recalls visiting New York City where she met Eleanor Roosevelt. After her father finished law school, Belt's family moved to Dallas, Texas, where she attended Lincoln High School, which at the time was undergoing integration. Belt graduated from Lincoln High School in 1961 and attended Spelman College. After her freshman year, she transferred to the University of Denver.

Segregation--Alabama--Tuskegee.

Harvard Law School.

Childhood and youth.

School integration--Texas--Dallas.

Spelman College.

University of Denver.

Video Oral History Interview with Mollie Belt, Section
A2013_023_001_003, TRT: 3:28:44 2013/01/29

Mollie Finch Belt describes the unsafe environment in Atlanta, Georgia during the Civil Rights Movement of the early 1960s, and the strict structures that were established to ensure the safety of Spelman College students under the leadership of its president, Dr. Albert E. Manley. After her freshman year, Belt transferred to the University of Denver to study sociology and psychology. After graduating in 1965, she was hired as an employment counselor with the Texas Employment Commission in Harlingen, Texas. There she met and married James C. Belt, Jr., and in the early 1970s, they moved to Houston where he attended Thurgood Marshall Law School. While

in Houston, Belt worked as Assistant Manpower Director for Harris County. When her husband finished law school, they moved to Dallas, where Belt worked as the manager of the Title VI Program for the city. Soon after, she was hired as a branch chief for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Belt recalls how her father started 'The Dallas Examiner' in 1986.

Spelman College.

University of Denver.

Civil rights movements--Georgia--Atlanta.

Texas Employment Commission.

Marriage.

Thurgood Marshall School of Law.

United States. Department of Health and Human Services.

African American newspapers.

Video Oral History Interview with Mollie Belt, Section
A2013_023_001_004, TRT: 4:28:57 2013/01/29

Mollie Finch Belt describes how her father founded 'The Dallas Examiner' in 1986. Belt's parents were murdered during a home burglary after 'The Daily Examiner' had only printed a few issues. Belt then sought an early retirement from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to work on the paper full-time. She talks about the numerous additions she made to the paper. Belt also describes the Future Speak program for aspiring young journalists, funded by AT & T, the Coca Cola Company, and Frost Bank, and how she was forced to end the program due to lack of funding during the recession.

African American parents--Murder.

United States. Department of Health and Human Services.

Recessions--United States.

African American press.

African American newspapers.

Video Oral History Interview with Mollie Belt, Section
A2013_023_001_005, TRT: 5:28:33 2013/01/29

Mollie Finch Belt describes her struggle and eventual failure to keep The Dallas Examiner's youth program, Future Speak, in continued existence. She also talks about

the coverage provided by The Dallas Examiner on the 'PROBE' and 'Battling AIDS in Our Community,' including special editorial supplements on the arts and facilitating a city wide meeting on HIV Aids at a mega church in Dallas headed by Reverend Rickey Rush. Belt describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and her desire to see The Dallas Examiner succeed.

AIDS activists.

Rush, Rickie Glenn.

African American newspapers--Texas--Dallas.

African American press.

Video Oral History Interview with Mollie Belt, Section A2013_023_001_006, TRT: 6:18:46 2013/01/29

Mollie Finch Belt talks about the continued relevance of traditional print media while acknowledging the importance of electronic media. Belt then describes her two children. Her son graduated from Paul Quinn College and works for The Dallas Examiner as an advertising manager. Her daughter graduated from Xavier University in Louisiana, and is now the managing partner for a private group of OB/GYN doctors in Austin, Texas. Belt describes the political landscape in Texas, the prominence of the Republican Party, and the financial and business success that the party has brought to the state of Texas. Belt talks about the continued existence of 'institutional racism' and how she would like to be remembered. She closes the interview by describing her photographs.

Digital media.

African American children--Texas.

Politics and government--Texas.

Racism.

Photographs.