

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ernest Levert

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Levert, Ernest D, 1954-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Levert,
Dates:	January 29, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:21:51).
Abstract:	Material science engineer and welding engineer Ernest Levert (1954 -) , the first African American to serve as president of the American Welding Society, has worked with the U.S. Department of Defense and NASA as an engineer at Lockheed Martin. Levert 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_025
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Engineer Ernest D. Levert was born on March 15, 1954 in Cleveland, Ohio. Levert grew up in Cleveland where he attended Max S. Hayes High School and interned with NASA at the John H. Glenn Research Center as a sophomore. He graduated from Max S. Hayes High School in 1972. Then, after working briefly as a tool and die welder at Club Products in Cleveland, Levert served a tour of duty in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War and attended the U.S. Navy's C-1 Welding School. Levert went on to graduate from Ohio State University in 1982 with his B.S. degree in welding engineering, specializing in laser-beam and

electron-beam welding.

In 1986, Levert joined Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control Division in Dallas, Texas where he worked on projects under NASA and the U.S. Department of Defense that included International Space Station and the Army Tactical Missile System. Levert's division created and implemented photovoltaic radiators for the International Space Station's crew areas and the removal of excess heat. He also developed a system of elbow tubing designed to carry coolant gases in radiators that are part of the Space Station. In 1996, Levert was appointed senior staff manufacturing engineer at Lockheed Martin; and, by 2000, Levert's team had successfully welded 284 missiles. Throughout his career, Levert has developed standard policies and processes that provide structural integrity for many Lockheed Martin products. He also contributed a chapter to the book, *Sparking the Future: National Center for Welding Education and Training*, published by the Welding Education Center in 2009.

In 2002, Levert became the first African American to serve as president of the American Welding Society. He was honored with the Outstanding Alumni Award from Ohio State University's School of Engineering in 2004 and with the NOVA Award for Outstanding leadership from Lockheed Martin in 2006.

Ernest D. Levert was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 29, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ernest Levert was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 29, 2013, in Dallas, Texas, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Material science engineer and welding engineer Ernest Levert (1954 -), the first African American to serve as president of the American Welding Society, has worked with the U.S. Department of Defense and NASA as an engineer at Lockheed Martin.

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:

Levert, Ernest D, 1954-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Levert, Ernest D, 1954---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

Lockheed Martin

Lockheed Martin

Occupations:

Material Science Engineer

Welding Engineer

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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 Ernest Levert, 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

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 Ernest Levert, Section
A2013_025_001_001, TRT: 1:28:58 2013/01/29

Ernest Levert describes his family background. His mother, Gertrude Ethel Johnson, was born in August of 1919 in Hillsboro, Alabama. She moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where she attended Central High School. Levert's father, William McKinley Levert, was born in June of 1906 in Hale County, Alabama. The Levert family originates from Ethiopia and France and is related to the famous Levert family. After his family moved from Alabama to Cleveland, Levert joined the U.S. Army and served during World War II. He later worked for the Union Carbide Corporation as a general laborer. Levert talks about his family and his growing up in Cleveland, Ohio.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

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Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Levert, Section
A2013_025_001_002, TRT: 2:29:12 2013/01/29

Ernest Levert talks about his growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, where he attended John D. Rockefeller Elementary School. From an early age, Levert was interested in

pursuing a career in engineering. He was first introduced to the field by watching television programs, such as “My Three Sons.” By the time Levert reached middle school, at Wilson Junior High, his interest in engineering advanced into a fascination with welding. Levert entered Max Vocational High School in 1969, where he focused on welding; he also struggled with some of his math courses. In 1970, Levert worked as a welder’s helper at NASA’s Lewis Research Center, which fueled his interest in the space program, and found a mentor in Julian Earls [HM]. Levert also talks about his high school mentors, his favorite movie, “October Sky,” the 1966 Hough Ohio Riots, and his involvement in sports.

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Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Levert, Section A2013_025_001_003, TRT: 3:29:30 2013/01/29

Ernest Levert attended Max Hayes Vocational High School in Cleveland, Ohio. In addition to his summer job at NASA’s Lewis Space Center, Levert participated in organizations to enhance his leadership skills, such as the Vocational Institution Club of America (VICA), serving as manager of the basketball team, and Boy Scouts of America. After graduating from high school in 1972, Levert went to work as a tool and die welder at the aluminum cookware manufacturer, Club Products. After working there for two years, he joined the U.S. Navy, where he also attended the C-1 Welding School. Levert describes his experiences being involved with the Boy Scouts, working at Club Products and in the U.S. Navy. He also talks about the importance of communication skills and his interest in Star Trek.

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Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Levert, Section
A2013_025_001_004, TRT: 4:28:54 2013/01/29

Ernest Levert joined the U.S. Navy in 1974, after spending two years working as a club and die welder at Club Products. Due to his welding preparation at Max Hayes Vocational High School, he completed the Navy's eighteen-week C-1 High Pressure Welding School in ten weeks. After graduating at the top of the Navy's BOOST Program, Levert enrolled at The Ohio State University where he studied welding engineering. When one of his teachers observed his advanced skills, Levert was hired as a teaching assistant during his sophomore year in undergrad. He talks about his summer employment and internships at engineering and manufacturing plants, such as Alcoa and Caterpillar Inc. After receiving his B.S. degree in 1982, and after eighteen job offers, Levert took his first full-time welding engineering job at Ametek Straza in El Cajon, California.

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Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Levert, Section
A2013_025_001_005, TRT: 5:30:08 2013/01/29

Ernest Levert talks about his academic struggles at The Ohio State University. During his junior and senior years, he served as president of the American Welding Society. After receiving his B.S. degree in welding engineering in 1982, Levert went on to work for Ametek Straza in El Cajon, California, where he worked on building jet engines and the Space Shuttle Challenger. After working there for a little over a year, he joined Geodynamics and worked on robotic applications and atomic cruise missiles. In 1986, Levert joined Lockheed Martin and his projects centered on building missiles.

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Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Levert, Section
A2013_025_001_006, TRT: 6:30:55 2013/01/29

Ernest Levert joined Lockheed Martin in 1986 and was appointed as project manager of several missile programs because of his expertise with high energy beam welding. One of his most challenging projects was on a live missile system where he developed the electron-beam welding procedures, as well as personally executing the procedure by performing the initial welds. His hard work paid off, earning the company \$700,000. Many of Levert's projects centered around NASA's space launch programs. Levert discusses the mechanics behind the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, where he lost his friend and mentor, Ronald McNair. He also describes his professional activities and shares his advice for aspiring welding engineers.

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Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Levert, Section
A2013_025_001_007, TRT: 7:24:14 2013/01/29

Ernest Levert talks about his impact among the international community of engineers as well as Lockheed Martin's commitment to diversity. Levert discusses his hopes and concerns for the African American community, reflects on his career, talks about his family, and describes his photos.

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