

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Calvin Lowe

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lowe, Calvin W.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Lowe,
Dates:	February 26, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:01:50).
Abstract:	Physicist and education administrator Calvin Lowe (1955 -) was the former vice president of research and program development at the National Institute for Aerospace and the ninth president of Bowie State University. Lowe was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 26, 2013, in Hampton, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_072
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Education administrator and physicist Calvin Lowe was born in Roanoke Rapids, Michigan in 1955. After graduating from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University with his B.S. degree in physics, Lowe enrolled at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where he earned his M.S. degree in plasma physics in 1979. Upon completing his doctoral thesis, "Optical Properties of Graphite Intercalation Compounds," Lowe graduated from MIT with his Ph.D. degree in solid state physics in 1983.

Upon graduation, Lowe began teaching as an associate professor of physics at the University of Kentucky. In 1987, Lowe was appointed as an associate professor of physics at Hampton University and was named chair of the department of physics. He left Hampton University in 1992 and moved to Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical State University in Huntsville, Alabama where he served as chair of the department of physics from 1992 to 1995. In 1996, Lowe returned to Hampton University and he served as the vice president of research and dean of the graduate college. In that position, he was instrumental in building an internationally recognized atmospheric-sciences research group. Lowe was named the ninth president of Bowie State University in Bowie, Maryland and served from 2000 to 2006. While at Bowie, Lowe was as a member of the Task Force to Study College Readiness for Disadvantaged and Capable Students. Lowe has also served as the vice president of research and program development at the National Institute for Aerospace. In 2011, Lowe was appointed as the dean of the School of Science at Hampton University.

In addition to serving as faculty and administrator, Lowe served as a member of the board of Directors for the University System of Maryland from 2000 to 2006. He is a member of the American Physical Society, the National Society of Black Physicists and the Association of University Technology Managers. In 2011, Lowe received the Outstanding Achievement Award from the National Aeronautic and Space Administration's Marshall Space Flight Center.

Lowe lives in Maryland with his wife, Tanya, and their two adult children, Maya and Calvin. His brother, Dr. Walter Lowe, is a professor of physics at Howard University.

Calvin Lowe was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 25, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Calvin Lowe was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 26, 2013, in Hampton, Virginia, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Physicist and education administrator Calvin Lowe (1955 -) was the former vice president of research and program development at the National Institute for Aerospace and the ninth president of Bowie State University.

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:

Lowe, Calvin W.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lowe, Calvin W.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

National Institute of Aerospace

Occupations:

Physicist

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 Calvin Lowe, February 26, 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 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 Calvin Lowe, Section A2013_072_001_001, TRT: 1:28:12 ?

Calvin Lowe describes his family background. Lowe's parents, Gertrude Brown and Walter Rodgers Lowe, were born in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina in 1920 and 1913, respectively. His maternal grandparents, Thomas Brown and Verlie Hockaday Brown owned a hundred acres of land, and were farmers also in Roanoke Rapids. Lowe describes his mother's growing up where she attended the London School until the sixth grade. Here, she developed an interest in poetry by American poets such as Paul Lawrence Dunbar and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Lowe's father attended school until the third grade. He describes his father's interest in tinkering with gadgets, building tools, and his career as a cement fixer in construction. In this section of the interview, Lowe also talks about growing up in Roanoke Rapids, his siblings, and his childhood memories of playing with his twin brother, Walter Lowe.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Lowe, Section A2013_072_001_002, TRT: 2:28:51 ?

Calvin Lowe was born and raised in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina. He describes his memories there, and talks about his childhood pets. Lowe attended Chaloner High School for elementary school, where he enjoyed social studies, such as geography. He describes his father's influence in his early exposure to science and technology, his interest in science shows on television, and reading his mother's collection of books. When Lowe was in the sixth grade, in the mid-1960s, he and his twin brother, Walter, began to attend William R. Davie School. He describes the challenges that they faced as the first African American students to integrate the school. Lowe attended high school at Northwest High School, which was formed after the mandatory court ordered integration of schools in North Carolina. Lowe also talks about his sister, Verba Jones, who attended North Carolina College during the civil rights sit-ins in North Carolina.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Lowe, Section A2013_072_001_003, TRT: 3:29:41 ?

Calvin Lowe graduated a year early from Northwest High School in Roanoke Rapids, and began his undergraduate studies in physics at North Carolina A & T State University in 1972. He describes his experience there, and talks about his interest in physics. After receiving his B.S. degree in physics in 1976, Lowe was recommended to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) by Ronald McNair, also an alum of North Carolina A & T. He describes his experience while pursuing his Ph.D. degree in physics at MIT, and talks about his involvement with the Black Student Union (BSU) there. While at MIT, Lowe began to lose his interest in pursuing a career in research, and instead began to develop an interest in teaching. In this section of the interview, Lowe talks about his mentor at MIT, Professor Mildred S. Dresselhaus, and also describes his relationship with his twin brother, Walter.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Lowe, Section A2013_072_001_004, TRT: 4:27:16 ?

In 1976, Calvin Lowe began his graduate studies in physics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He describes the academic and social challenges he faced there, his gradual loss of interest in physics, and developing an interest in teaching and mentoring. Lowe describes his master's degree research in plasma physics, under the guidance of Professor W.P. Allis. Under the tutelage of Professor Mildred S. Dresselhaus, Lowe completed his dissertation on studying the optical properties of graphite intercalation compounds. From 1983 to 1987, Lowe served as an assistant professor of physics at the University of Kentucky. He shares his experience there, and talks about race relations and the demographics in Kentucky in the 1980s. In 1987, Lowe joined the physics department at Hampton University, where he has been involved in establishing a doctoral program as well as the Research Center for Optical Physics.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Lowe, Section A2013_072_001_005, TRT: 5:29:37 ?

In 1992, Calvin Lowe became the head of the physics department at Alabama A and M University in Huntsville, Alabama. In 1995, Lowe returned to Hampton University as the dean of the graduate school and vice president of research. In 2000, Lowe became the ninth president of Bowie State University, where he played a key role in establishing a High Performance Computing (HPC) cluster, several new buildings on campus, and strengthening the university's athletic programs. After stepping down from this position in 2006, he accepted a position as vice president of research and program development at the National Institute of Aerospace in 2007, a move that was facilitated by HistoryMaker, James Hubbard. In this section of the interview, Lowe describes his experience in his administrative roles at Alabama A and M University, Hampton University and Bowie State University.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Lowe, Section A2013_072_001_006, TRT: 6:32:33 ?

As the vice president of research and program development at the National Institute of Aerospace (NIA), Calvin Lowe was instrumental in facilitating the construction of a permanent building for the institute, and the development of a large contract with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Lowe discusses the death of his son in 2010. The same year, he returned to Hampton University as the dean of the School of Sciences, where he has been involved in leading efforts to becoming a research-intensive institution. Lowe describes the success of the marine science and computer science programs at Hampton, the doctoral

programs in the School of Sciences, its nanoscience concentration, and his interest in boron nitride nanotubes. He discusses university outreach to secondary schools, and research and teaching responsibilities for university faculty. Lowe also reflects upon his legacy, his future in academic administration, and his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Lowe, Section A2013_072_001_007, TRT: 7:05:40 ?

In this final section of the interview, Calvin Lowe talks about his children, his grandchildren, and his wife. He also reflects upon the future of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the United States, and on how he would like to be remembered.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.