

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with David James

---

## 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>	James, David F., 1923-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with David James,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 21, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:42:46).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Military officer and lawyer David James (1923 - 2016 ) served as a Tuskegee Airman with the 332nd Fighter Group. In 1967, James was employed as the first African American attorney at the American Bar Association. James was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 21, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_201
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Army Air Corps officer and attorney Lt. David F. James was born on November 17, 1923 in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1941, after graduating from Lane Tech High School in Chicago, James attended Loyola University. During his freshman year in 1942, James entered the U.S. Army Air Corps Aviation Cadet Training Program in Tuskegee, Alabama. Upon arrival at Tuskegee Air Field, James was assigned to the 332nd Fighter Group where he trained to fly single seat fighter planes.

From 1944 to 1945, James flew combat missions with the 332nd Fighter Group over Germany as well as other countries in Eastern Europe during World War II. In 1946, James completed his tour of duty with the Army Air Force and re-enrolled at Loyola University. Later, in 1949, James graduated from Loyola University with his B.A. degree. James was hired by business machine manufacturer Burroughs Corporation in 1950 and became the company's first African American salesman. In 1956, James found a job with the University of Chicago before he was appointed as a deputy director with the State of Illinois in 1961. While there, part of his responsibilities involved working on the "War on Poverty." James then graduated from DePaul University College of Law with his J.D. degree in 1963. James was hired by the American Bar Association (ABA) in 1967 and became the first African American attorney to be hired by that organization. He worked at the ABA until 1984.

In 1967, James became the first African American homeowner in Winnetka, Illinois. Soon after moving to Winnetka, James became involved in groups that were forming on the North Shore to promote better race relations and open housing. In 1967, James and his wife, Mary, established Together We Influence Growth (TWIG) Day Camp that brings together children from South Side neighborhoods and children from the North Shore. In 1972, James helped found the North Shore Interfaith Housing Council (now the Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs), which is organized to fight housing discrimination. In the late 1980s, James was appointed as an administrative law judge for the U.S. Department of Labor. In 1990, James went into private practice as an attorney and remained there until 2000. In 2009, James, along with more than one hundred other Tuskegee Airmen,

attended the Inauguration Ceremony of President Barack Obama.

Army Air Corps Officer Lt. David F. James was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 21, 2013.

James passed away on July 23, 2016.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with David James was conducted by Anthony Poole on August 21, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Military officer and lawyer David James (1923 - 2016 ) served as a Tuskegee Airman with the 332nd Fighter Group. In 1967, James was employed as the first African American attorney at the American Bar Association.

---

## 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:

James, David F., 1923-

Poole, Anthony (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

James, David F., 1923- --Interviews

---

United States--Armed Forces--African American Officers--Interviews.

---

African American lawyers--Interviews.

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

Army Air Corps

---

## Occupations:

Military Officer

---

Lawyer

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers|MilitaryMakers

---

## 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 David James, August 21, 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 6/7/2022 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 David James, Section A2013\_201\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:45  
2013/08/21

David James describes his maternal family history. James' mother, Ada Foster, was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in September of 1889. She attended Sumner High School, went on to train to become a teacher, and established a career as a school teacher in St. Louis. Ada's father, John Foster, was born in Nashville, Tennessee, around 1860, and was raised in St. Louis, where he established himself as a respected businessman. Ada Foster's mother, Lavinia Guyol, was of Creole heritage and born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1859. James' grandparents met and married in St. Louis around 1890. James describes his mother's upbringing in St. Louis, where her family was very involved in St. Elizabeth Catholic Church. He also talks about his grandmother's death.

African American families.

African American mothers--Missouri.

African American Churches.

African American grandparents.

Creoles--Louisiana.

Video Oral History Interview with David James, Section A2013\_201\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:24  
2013/08/21

David James' father, William Henry James, was born in Evansville, Indiana, in May of 1886. He left Evansville and spent his life as a railroad chef cook, also helping to organize the Dining Car Waiters' Union. James lived in St. Louis, Missouri until he was five years old, when his father moved the family to Chicago, Illinois, so that his children could get a better education. James describes his parents' personalities, his mother's sheltered life in St. Louis, and his father's family background, which includes a Cherokee branch. James was one of ten children, who all went on to receive a college education. He also describes the close knit and high achieving African American community in the West Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago, and talks about the prominent people who lived there.

African American fathers--Indiana.

Porters.

Migration, Internal--United States.

African American families.

Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs.

Video Oral History Interview with David James, Section A2013\_201\_001\_003, TRT: 3:28:34  
2013/08/21

David James was raised in the West Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois. He talks about the sights, sounds and smells of growing up there, his family's mealtimes together and attending Holy Cross Catholic Church. James began school at McCosh Elementary School, which was an all-African American school, and later attended Lane Technical College Prep High School,

where he was the only African American student in his class. He describes his experience in school, his commute to high school, and his involvement in extracurricular activities such as basketball, the student council, Latin Club and forensics. James also talks about his high school friend, Jim Onitas, and his decision to enroll in Loyola University in 1941.

Childhood--Illinois--Chicago.

Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs.

Catholic Church.

Education--Illinois--Chicago.

Loyola University of Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with David James, Section A2013\_201\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:30  
2013/08/21

David James began his undergraduate studies at Loyola University in 1941, the same year that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, provoking the United States to enter World War II. In October of 1942, James was drafted into the Army Air Corps, and assigned to basic training at Tuskegee Airfield in Alabama. James describes his trip from Chicago, Illinois to Alabama, and his first exposure to the Jim Crow laws of the South. He talks about his experience at basic training and pilot training with the renowned Alfred "Chief" Anderson. James also talks about his early interest in aviation as a high school student at Lane Technical College Prep High School in Chicago, and the time that he spent observing airplanes near the Midway and Harlem Airports in Chicago.

Loyola University of Chicago.

United States. Army Air Forces.

World War, 1939-1945.

Racism--Southern States.

Aeronautics.

Video Oral History Interview with David James, Section A2013\_201\_001\_005, TRT: 5:30:13  
2013/08/21

David James attended flight training with the Army Air Corps at Tuskegee Airfield. He was trained by Alfred "Chief" Anderson, who is known to have flown First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt during her visit to Tuskegee. James talks about his first time flying solo, crashes and washouts during flight training school, relying on instrumentation for flight, and race relations at Tuskegee. By 1944, James was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. He was sent to North Africa and on to combat in World War II in Europe as part of the 15th Air Force. He describes the fighter planes that he flew in combat in Germany, and discusses their engineering. James returned to Chicago in 1946, a few months after the war ended, and in 1949, received his Bachelors of Arts degree from Loyola University. James also talks about Albert Stewart, the first African American admitted to the U.S. Navy's Officer Training Program, and the Great Migration of African Americans coming to Chicago from the South in the 1940s.

Tuskegee Army Air Field (Ala.)

Flight training--Alabama--Tuskegee.

African Americans in aeronautics.

World War, 1939-1945--Africa, North.

World War, 1939-1945--Air operations--American--Germany.

Loyola University of Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with David James, Section A2013\_201\_001\_006, TRT: 6:30:25  
2013/08/21

In 1946, David James returned to Chicago after World War II, resumed his undergraduate degree at Loyola University, and received his Bachelors of Arts degree in 1949. He also met his future wife, Mary Gallaway, in 1946, while the couple was involved in the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago. In 1950, James became the first African American to be hired as a salesman at Burroughs Corporation. He also worked at the University College at the University of Chicago a few years later. In 1961, James was appointed as the State of Illinois Minority Representative by Governor Otto Kerner. In 1963, he received his J.D. degree from DePaul University's College of Law, and in 1967, he became the first African American attorney to work at the American Bar Association. He also became the first African American to buy a home in Winnetka, Illinois. James discusses his involvement in the Civil Right Movement in Chicago, and meeting Dr. Martin Luther King during his visit to Chicago in 1964.

Loyola University of Chicago.

Marriage.

Civil rights movements--Illinois--Chicago.

DePaul University. College of Law.

American Bar Association.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

Video Oral History Interview with David James, Section A2013\_201\_001\_007, TRT: 7:30:50  
2013/08/21

In 1967, David James and his family became the first African Americans to purchase a home in Winnetka, Illinois. James talks about his decision to move to Winnetka, his children's transition into their new schools, and his and his wife's involvement in community activities there. In the late 1980s, James served as an administrative law judge for the Department of Labor, working with the Unemployment Compensation Program. In the 1990s, he went back to a private law practice for a period of about ten years. In 2008, James joined other Tuskegee Airman to attend President Barack Obama's inauguration. He talks about the "Dodo Club" for retired Tuskegee Airmen and meeting with his high school classmates. James goes on to talks about his children and his grandchildren, and begins to reflect upon his legacy.

Winnetka (Ill.)

United States.--Department of Labor.

Lawyers.

Obama, Barack.

Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.

Video Oral History Interview with David James, Section A2013\_201\_001\_008, TRT: 8:15:05  
2013/08/21

In this final section of the interview, David James reflects upon his legacy and his high school history teacher, Dr. Walner (sp.), who had immigrated to the United States from Nazi Germany. James closes the interview by describing photographs of his family and career.

Reminiscing.

Mentoring.

Photographs.