

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Marcia Lythcott

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lythcott, Marcia, 1954-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Lythcott,
Dates:	August 19, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:14:11).
Abstract:	Newspaper editor Marcia Lythcott (1954 -) , long-time editor of the “Commentary” section in the Chicago Tribune, also served as editor of Style and Home and the Good Eating Cookbook. Lythcott was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 19, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_229
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Newspaper editor Marcia Lythcott was born on May 20, 1954 in Montgomery, Alabama. Her father, William Watkins, served in the U.S. Army; her mother, and Florence Watkins, a nurse’s aide. Both of her parents were avid readers. Lythcott’s mother used newspapers to introduce her and her sister, Pam, to politics. Some her favorite childhood novels and magazines were the *Bobbsey Twins* series, fairy tales, *True Confessions* magazine, *Ebony* and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. After graduating from high school, both Lythcott and her sister attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Lythcott graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with her B.A. degree in journalism.

Lythcott began her career in print journalism in the late 1970’s. She worked for four years as an education and police beat reporter for a local newspaper in Madison-Wisconsin. Then, in 1982, she was hired by the *Chicago Tribune* newspaper and began writing editorial pieces. Lythcott also assisted with major research projects and served as an editor of the “Opinion” section. Her article titled “Encore!, Encore!” (1987), published in the *Chicago Tribune*’s “Food Guide” section, was recognized as the most popular article and Best Reprise Recipe. At the *Chicago Tribune* Company, she served as the editor of *Style and Home* and the *Good Eating Cookbook*. As editor of the “Commentary” section in the *Chicago Tribune*, Lythcott typically read seventy-five to one-hundred opinion submissions a day. Later in her career, she became one of the highest ranking African American women on the *Chicago Tribune*’s editorial board.

Lythcott also served on the board member of the Louis Carr Internship Foundation. Her late husband, Stephen Lythcott, served as the vice president of the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois until his death in 1994. Throughout the years, her favorite pastimes have been reading, traveling, gardening and ballet.

Marcia Lythcott was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 19, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Marcia Lythcott was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 19, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Newspaper editor Marcia Lythcott (1954 -) , long-time editor of the “Commentary” section in the Chicago Tribune, also served as editor of Style and Home and the Good Eating Cookbook.

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:

Lythcott, Marcia, 1954-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lythcott, Marcia, 1954- --Interviews

African American newspaper editors--Interviews.

African American journalists--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Newspaper Editor

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 Marcia Lythcott, August 19, 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 Marcia Lythcott, Section A2013_229_001_001, TRT: 1:23:35 ?
Marcia Ann Lythcott describes her family's background. Her maternal grandmother was a maid in Greenville, Alabama, where her mother, Florence Watkins, was born on November 8, 1921. Her maternal grandfather was a

handyman, and Lythcott describes him as an "outside artist." She describes her mother's dislike of the South as well as her strong-willed nature. Her mother started college to become a nurse, but left when she married Lythcott's father, William Watkins. Lythcott talks about her father's side of the family who were from Birmingham, Alabama. Her paternal grandmother was a maid, and she did not know her paternal grandfather. She describes her father's side of the family as quiet and reserved. After high school, her father joined the Air Force as a mechanic and that became his career. Lythcott frequently moved around the country growing up, which forced her to learn to make friends quickly. She describes her first days of school in Clovis, New Mexico and her early love of reading.

African American grandparents.

African American mothers.

African American fathers.

African Americans--Education, Elementary--New Mexico--Clovis.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

Moving, Household.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Lythcott, Section A2013_229_001_002, TRT: 2:27:45 ?

Marcia Ann Lythcott describes living in Germany at a young age, her early love of reading, and the sights, sounds, and smells of growing up. Lythcott's family moved to Madison, Wisconsin in 1968. She reflects upon her parents' reactions to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, and describes her experiences in high school as one of the few African American students. Lythcott participated in Badger Girl State, a program for talented high school students. She recalls the encouragement of a group of activists from Chicago, Illinois, which included Conrad Worrill, who came to her high school to teach African American history. Lythcott describes her social life in college and the protests at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She also talks about an internship in La Crosse, Wisconsin, where she experienced discrimination.

Childhood and youth--Activities--Germany.

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

Moving, Household--Wisconsin--Madison.

African Americans--Education, Secondary--Wisconsin--Madison.

University of Wisconsin--Madison.

Internship programs--Wisconsin--La Crosse.

Racial discrimination.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Lythcott, Section A2013_229_001_003, TRT: 3:28:28 ?

Marcia Ann Lythcott talks about the discrimination she faced while interning in La Crosse, Wisconsin, graduating from college and her first job at the Racine Journal Times, where she was the first black reporter. She talks about an editor, Chuck Edwards, who mentored her and the other young hires. She describes herself and her colleagues as ambitious. Lythcott talks about how she landed her job at Chicago Tribune in 1983 and her impressions of Harold Washington who was elected mayor that year. She discusses the African American presence at the Chicago Tribune in 1983 and compares it today's African American presence. Lythcott discusses the various jobs she had at the Chicago Tribune before she became a member of the editorial board.

Internship programs--Wisconsin--La Crosse.

Racial discrimination.

Journalism--Mentoring.

Washington, Harold, 1922-1987.

Chicago Tribune (Firm).

Diversity in the workplace--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Lythcott, Section A2013_229_001_004, TRT: 4:29:51 ?

Marcia Ann Lythcott discusses the political history and culture at the Chicago Tribune. She talks about how the editorial board decides whom to endorse for president as well as their positions on difficult issues, such as the death penalty and abortion. She talks about the Chicago Tribune's endorsement of President Barack Obama. Lythcott also talks about the different roles of the editorial board and how technology has changed journalism. As "Commentary" editor, Lythcott interacts with people such as Mia Farrow and Muammar Gaddafi. She publishes diverse opinions, even if she opposes them. She talks about the op-ed submissions process, what makes a good editorial piece, and finding strong female writers. Lythcott discusses allegations of collusion and conspiracy at the Chicago Tribune.

Chicago Tribune (Firm)--Political ethics.

Obama, Barack.

Political campaigns.

Digital communications.

Editing--Methodology.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Lythcott, Section A2013_229_001_005, TRT: 5:24:32 ?

Marcia Ann Lythcott describes editorial accountability at the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Tribune's low readership among African Americans, and its coverage of the African American community. Lythcott also talks about the underrepresentation of African American models and the need for more African American reporters. Lythcott then reflects upon her legacy, and what she will do in the future. She talks about writing a series of Young Adult novels, living in an African American community in Chicago, Illinois, and her hopes and concerns for the African American community. Lythcott describes how she will be more politically active when she retires from journalism. She also describes her experiences with the NABJ (National Association of Black Journalists) and the Maynard Institute. Lythcott closes the interview by talking about her late husband, Stephen Lythcott, and how she would like to be remembered.

Chicago Tribune (Firm).

African American leadership.

African American neighborhoods--Illinois--Chicago.

Retirement.

National Association of Black Journalists.

Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education.