

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Leon Bibb

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bibb, Leon Douglas, 1944-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Leon Bibb,
Dates:	February 13, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:22:48).
Abstract:	Broadcast journalist Leon Bibb (1944 -) was the State of Ohio's first African American primetime anchor. He has received six local Emmy Awards, several Cleveland Press Club citations, the Distinguished Journalist Award from the Society for Professional Journalists, and has been inducted into the Broadcaster's Hall of Fame. Bibb was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 13, 2014, in Cleveland, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_050
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Broadcast journalist Leon Douglas Bibb was born on October 5, 1944 in Butler, Alabama to Georgia and Leon Bibb. At the age of one, his family moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where he grew up and graduated from Glenville High School. Bibb received his B.S. degree in journalism from Bowling Green State University in 1966. He then went on to study radio, TV and film as a graduate student. He also served in the Vietnam War and was awarded a Bronze Star.

In the late 1960s, Bibb worked as a news reporter for *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland, Ohio. He was hired as a reporter for WTOL-TV in Toledo, Ohio in 1971, and worked as a news anchor and reporter for WCMH-TV in Columbus, Ohio from 1972 to 1979. In 1976, while at WCMH-TV, Bibb became Ohio's first African American primetime anchor. Then, in 1979, he moved to WKYC-TV in Cleveland, and was promoted to primary news anchor for the Monday through Friday newscasts in 1986. In 1995, Bibb was hired as a news anchor and reporter for WEWS-TV. He has narrated and hosted many shows at WEWS-TV, including "My Ohio with Leon Bibb," "Leon Bibb's Perspective," "Kaleidoscope," and a series called "Our Hometown." Bibb has interviewed numerous political leaders and notable figures, including President Barack Obama, President George H. W. Bush, Neil Armstrong, and James Earl Ray, the convicted assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In addition, Bibb has written several short stories and poems, many of which have been published.

Bibb has won six local Emmy Awards and received several citations from the Cleveland Press Club for excellence in journalism. He has also received the Distinguished Journalist Award from the Society for Professional Journalists, and Awards of Excellence from Cleveland State University and the Radio-TV Council. Bibb has been inducted into the Broadcaster's Hall of Fame, Glenville High School Hall of Fame, Bowling Green State University School of Communications Hall of Fame, Associated Press Ohio Broadcasters Hall of Fame, Sigma Delta Chi Hall of Fame, and the Cleveland Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame. In 1996, Governor George Voinovich

appointed Bibb to the Board of Trustees at Bowling Green State University, where he also served as chairman.

Bibb lives in Shaker Heights, Ohio with his wife, Marguerite. They have two daughters: Jennifer and Alison.

Leon Bibb was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 13, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Leon Bibb was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 13, 2014, in Cleveland, Ohio, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Broadcast journalist Leon Bibb (1944 -) was the State of Ohio's first African American primetime anchor. He has received six local Emmy Awards, several Cleveland Press Club citations, the Distinguished Journalist Award from the Society for Professional Journalists, and has been inducted into the Broadcaster's Hall of Fame.

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:

Bibb, Leon Douglas, 1944-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bibb, Leon Douglas, 1944---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Broadcast Journalist

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 Leon Bibb, February 13, 2014. 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 Leon Bibb, Section A2014_050_001_001, TRT: 1:29:32 ?
Leon Bibb was born on October 5, 1944 in Butler, Alabama. His mother,

Georgia Crowell Bibb, was born on December 14, 1920 in Lisman, Alabama to Katie Easley Crowell and Henry Crowell. Henry Crowell was born around 1884 and worked as a farmer and carpenter. After the Civil War, Crowell's ancestors owned 960 acres of land in Alabama, but Crowell did not receive any of it. Georgia Bibb attended Choctaw County Training School and Alabama State Teachers College in Montgomery, Alabama. Bibb's father, Leon Bibb (no middle name), was born on August 16, 1917 to Lee Bibb and Estelle Garth Bibb in Hartselle, Alabama. Lee Bibb worked as a farmer while Estelle Bibb sold Sayman Salve to support their children. Leon Bibb attended Morgan County Training School and was encouraged by the principal, Mr. Fred, to attend Alabama State Teachers College in 1935, where he met Georgia Crowell. Bibb and Crowell moved to Cleveland, Ohio independently of each other around 1940, where Crowell met John O. Holly, and married in 1942.

Video Oral History Interview with Leon Bibb, Section A2014_050_001_002, TRT: 2:29:26 ?

Leon Bibb describes his mother's meeting with John O. Holly when she moved to Cleveland, Ohio. Holly ran the Future Outlook League in Cleveland and helped Bibb's mother find a job at the Marshall Drug Company. Bibb's father, Leon Bibb, was drafted into the U.S. Army after Pearl Harbor and reported for duty in February 1942. Bibb's parents were also married on Thanksgiving Day in 1942. Bibb drove supply trucks in the Netherlands during World War II as part of the Red Ball Express and the Quartermaster Corps. During the war, Bibb's mother lived with her family in Lisman, Alabama. In November of 1945, Bibb returned to the United States, and the family moved to Cleveland, Ohio in 1946. By 1947, Bibb worked in the post office and in autumn they moved to a duplex in the Glenville neighborhood. Bibb and his younger sister, Shirley Blackwell, grew up in Glenville between the Italian Cultural Garden and East 105 Street. Bibb attended Miles Standish Elementary School, and recalls the TV shows he watched in the 1950s.

Video Oral History Interview with Leon Bibb, Section A2014_050_001_003, TRT: 3:29:23 ?

Leon Bibb grew up in the Glenville neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio, where he watched the news about the Civil Rights Movement on television. Reading about the murder of Emmett Till in Jet magazine in 1955, he remembered the anxiety his family felt during car trips to visit relatives in Alabama. Bibb attended Liberty Hill Baptist Church and Miles Standish Elementary School, where his sixth-grade teacher, Robert Taylor, encouraged him to develop his gift of writing. From 1956 until 1959, Bibb attended Empire Junior High School. From 1959 until 1962, Bibb attended Glenville High School, where he regrets quitting a production of "The Diary of Anne Frank." Bibb reflects on his love of classic movies like "Shane," "Teacher's Pet," and "The Bridges at Toko-Ri" and how they have influenced his career and understanding of World War II. He also describes his acting role in the 2013 film "Made in Cleveland."

Video Oral History Interview with Leon Bibb, Section A2014_050_001_004, TRT: 4:29:10 ?

Leon Bibb recalls listening to and wanting to emulate other radio announcers and the way they spoke and read commercials, especially morning show host J.P. McCarthy and late-night jazz disc jockey Sid McCoy. After graduating from high school in 1962, Bibb enrolled at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio to study journalism. During his freshman year, he met his wife, Marguerite Bryant Bibb, and the two were married in 1966. Bibb recalls one of his professors, Jeff Clark, who encouraged Bibb and established high expectations of him. He also tells of the summer of 1965 when he was turned down for a required internship because of his race. Instead, Bibb reached out to the Cleveland Call and Post on his own accord and received an internship.

There, he reported on Jim Brown's trial and photographed Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during his visit to Cleveland, Ohio.

Video Oral History Interview with Leon Bibb, Section A2014_050_001_005, TRT: 5:33:31 ?

Leon Bibb interned at the Cleveland Call and Post during the summer of 1965. He reflects on the African American community in Cleveland, Ohio in the 1960s and the accessibility of black athletes. After receiving his B.S. degree in 1966, Bibb began writing for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, where other black reporters included Robert McGruder and Kenneth Banks, Jr. In November of 1966, Bibb was then drafted into the Fourth Infantry Division of the U.S. Army to fight in the Vietnam War. He was stationed at Camp Enari from 1967 until 1968, where he witnessed the death of his friend, Randall Lee Williams, and earned the Bronze Star Medal. In 1968, Bibb returned to Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio and became news director at the college's station, WBGU-TV, where he produced a student news program. Bibb left Bowling Green in 1971 to report news at WTOL-TV in Toledo, Ohio. In Toledo, Bibb picked up a hitchhiker who coincidentally encouraged him to apply for a position at WCMH-TV in Columbus, Ohio.

Video Oral History Interview with Leon Bibb, Section A2014_050_001_006, TRT: 6:30:09 ?

Leon Bibb became a news anchor at WCMH-TV in Columbus, Ohio in 1972 and remained at the station until January 1979. In 1976, he became Ohio's first African American primetime anchor. In 1978, Bibb had the opportunity to interview James Earl Ray, the person accused of killing Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary in Tennessee. Bibb interviewed Ray with the funding of Hustler publisher Larry Flint, who believed that Ray was innocent and hoped to get Ray a re-trial. Bibb remembers the feeling of shaking Ray's hand before the interview, Ray's evasiveness during the interview, and reporting the story about Ray and Flint for the WCMH-TV news. Bibb also reflects on Dr. King's assassination and other interviews of Ray, including that of HistoryMaker and Congressman Louis Stokes. In 1979, Bibb left Columbus and became a weekend news anchor at WKYC-TV in Cleveland, Ohio, where he worked with weatherman Al Roker and witnessed the city's economic rebound under Mayor George Voinovich.

Video Oral History Interview with Leon Bibb, Section A2014_050_001_007, TRT: 7:28:11 ?

Leon Bibb worked at WKYC-TV in Cleveland, Ohio from January of 1979 until March of 1995 and was anchor of the weekday evening news from 1988 until 1991. He recalls the sports teams in Cleveland, including the Cleveland Cavaliers and the Cleveland Browns, and the construction of Jacobs Field in downtown Cleveland. Bibb remembers the political tension in Cleveland between city council president and HistoryMaker George Forbes and Mayor Dennis Kucinich, as well as how Forbes and Mayor George Voinovich helped revitalize the city's economy with Jacobs Field, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, and the restoration of Playhouse Square. In 1991, Bibb worked as a reporter with the U.S. Coast Guard during Operation Desert Shield in Manama, Bahrain during the First Gulf War. After WKYC-TV was bought by Multimedia Broadcasting, Inc., Bibb was demoted to a street reporter in 1992. Bibb left WKYC-TV and joined WEWS in Cleveland in 1995, where he anchored "Weekend Exchange" and the public affairs show "Kaleidoscope."

Video Oral History Interview with Leon Bibb, Section A2014_050_001_008, TRT: 8:29:10 ?

Leon Bibb recalls the Cleveland Browns leaving Ohio for Baltimore, Maryland in 1995 under the ownership of Art Modell and how Mayor Michael R. White brought the Cleveland Browns back in 1999. Bibb describes the shows he anchored at the time of the interview, including the noon news, "Kaleidoscope,"

and “My Ohio with Leon Bibb”. He also describes his interview with boxing promoter Don King. Bibb reflects upon his journalistic philosophy of telling the story in an interesting way and how his career became his dream job. He also describes his hopes and concerns for reducing violence and strengthening families within the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Leon Bibb, Section A2014_050_001_009, TRT: 9:24:16 ?

Leon Bibb describes his family, including his wife Marguerite, his daughters Jennifer Clawson and Alison Bibb-Carson, and his four grandchildren. He ends the interview by reflecting on his legacy and narrating his photographs.