

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jim Vance

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Vance, Jim
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jim Vance,
Dates:	May 19, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:26:36).
Abstract:	Broadcast journalist Jim Vance (1942 - 2017) anchored WRC-TV Channel 4 in Washington, D.C. for forty-five years. He was inducted into the National Association of Black Journalists Hall of Fame in 2007. Vance was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 19, 2014, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_133
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Broadcast journalist Jim Vance was born on January 10, 1942 in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. In 1964, Vance earned his B.S. degree in secondary education from Cheyney State College (now Cheyney University) in Cheyney, Pennsylvania.

Upon graduation, Vance worked as a teacher in the Philadelphia Public Schools, and was then hired as a print journalist for *The Philadelphia Independent*. During this time he also worked weekends at the radio station WHAT-AM. In 1968, Vance moved to WKBS-TV in Philadelphia, where he served as a reporter and

interviewed Muhammad Ali. The following year, Vance joined WRC-TV NBC 4 in Washington, D.C., where he has worked for over forty-five years.

At WRC-TV, Vance worked as co-anchor with Glenn Rinker between 1972 and 1976, and then as a co-anchor with Sue Simmons from 1976 to 1980. Vance and Simmons were one of the first African American co-anchors of a major market newscast. Since 1989, Vance has co-anchored with Doreen Gentzler and they are the longest-running anchor team in Washington, D.C.

Vance has earned numerous awards and honors, including seventeen Emmys and membership in the Silver Circle of the Washington Chapter of the National Association of Television Arts and Sciences. He holds the Ted Yates Award for outstanding community service and has been honored as “Washingtonian of the Year.” Vance was inducted into the National Association of Black Journalists Hall of Fame in 2007, and on May 2, 2008, he was inducted into the National Alumni Hall of Fame of Cheyney University of Pennsylvania. He has also appeared in the documentaries, *Without Bias* and *The Nine Lives of Marion Barry*; and the feature film *State of Play*.

Vance lived in Washington, D.C. with his wife, Kath McCampbell Vance. They have three children and one grandson.

Jim Vance was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 19, 2014.

Vance passed away on July 22, 2017 at age 75.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jim Vance was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 19, 2014, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Broadcast journalist Jim Vance (1942 - 2017) anchored WRC-TV Channel 4 in Washington, D.C. for forty-five years. He was inducted into the National Association of Black Journalists Hall of Fame in 2007.

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:

Vance, Jim

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Vance, Jim--Interviews

Organizations:

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 Jim Vance, May 19, 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 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 (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 Jim Vance, Section
A2014_133_001_001, TRT: 1:30:31 2014/05/19

Jim Vance was born on January 10, 1942 in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania to Eleanor Littlejohn Vance and James Vance, Jr. According to the family lore, his mother was born to a wealthy white woman and an African American footman in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area. Her adoptive father, landscaper Joseph Littlejohn, was descended from a family of sharecroppers in Bunn, North Carolina. He raised Vance's mother in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, and she went on to attend the Alice Freeman Palmer Memorial Institute, a boarding school for black girls in Sedalia, North Carolina. There, she received instruction in etiquette, and befriended her classmate Maria Cole. During his childhood, Vance had a strained relationship with his mother and maternal grandfather. He developed a stronger rapport with his paternal grandfather, James Vance, Sr., who trained him as a plumber. At this point in the interview, Vance describes how he came to forgive his mother for her distant behavior during his youth.

Video Oral History Interview with Jim Vance, Section
A2014_133_001_002, TRT: 2:28:46 2014/05/19

Jim Vance's maternal grandfather, Joseph Littlejohn, worked as a landscaper for wealthy white families who lived in the Main Line area of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Vance's father, James Vance, Jr., was born in 1913 in Port Deposit, Maryland. There, Vance's paternal grandfather owned farmland and worked at the Conowingo Dam. Vance's paternal family eventually moved to Ardmore, Pennsylvania, where his grandfather secured a position at the Baldwin Locomotive Works. There, his contributions

improved the company's efficiency, but he was overlooked for promotions. In response, he left the job and started his own plumbing business. Vance's father graduated from Lower Merion High School in Ardmore, and went on to work as a plumber with his father. Because of his race, he was denied a license from the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry. During World War II, Vance's father served in a U.S. Army unit in Germany and France, where he fathered Vance's half-sister.

Video Oral History Interview with Jim Vance, Section
A2014_133_001_003, TRT: 3:29:02 2014/05/19

Jim Vance grew up in a small, working-class African American community within the majority-white town of Ardmore, Pennsylvania. The community included a number of black-owned businesses, including a realtor and several barbershops. Vance was barred from the all-white YMCA in Ardmore, and instead spent his free time at the playground in his neighborhood. His father died from liver cirrhosis in 1951; and, from that time, Vance was raised by his mother in his paternal grandparents' home. He accompanied his paternal grandfather to work as a plumber at wealthy white households, where he often witnessed dysfunctional family relationships. His relatives were strict in their expectations of his behavior, and instilled in him the importance of etiquette and confidence. They attended the Bethel A.M.E. Church, which was founded by one of his great-grandmothers. At this point in the interview, Vance remembers marching down the street with his father after his return from World War II.

Video Oral History Interview with Jim Vance, Section
A2014_133_001_004, TRT: 4:29:20 2014/05/19

Jim Vance attended Ardmore Avenue Elementary School and Ardmore Junior High School in Ardmore, Pennsylvania. Around this time, he developed an interest in journalism due to the influence of radio commentators like Walter Winchell and H.V. Kaltenborn, and newspapers like the Philadelphia Daily News and Philadelphia Bulletin. He also enjoyed reading crime fiction by Mickey Spillane, and sang in the choir at Ardmore's Bethel A.M.E. Church. Vance went on to

attend Lower Merion High School in Ardmore, where he was assigned to the academic track. He was also a member of the track and football teams. As a teenager, he had a brief encounter with law enforcement when his friends assaulted the police chief's son. He was released from police custody after his friends insisted that he was not involved. Upon graduating from high school, Vance aspired to become a plumber like his father and grandfather. However, with his aunt's encouragement, he decided to enroll at Cheyney State College in Cheyney, Pennsylvania.

Video Oral History Interview with Jim Vance, Section
A2014_133_001_005, TRT: 5:28:57 2014/05/19

Jim Vance entered Cheyney State College in Cheyney, Pennsylvania in 1960. There, he pledged to the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity and joined the football team, where his teammates included the future CBS news anchor Ed Bradley. Because Cheyney State College had fewer players on its team than other universities, Vance and his teammates played both offensive and defensive positions. At this point in the interview, Vance describes his transition from the majority-white Lower Merion High School in Ardmore, Pennsylvania to the historically black Cheyney State College, where he developed his racial consciousness. He was influenced by professors like Theodore T. Fletcher, Sr., as well as his football coach, James Stevenson, who built up the players' self-confidence through black history lessons. Coach Stevenson emphasized the contributions of leaders like the Haitian revolutionary Toussaint Louverture, as well as Joseph Cinque, who led the rebellion on the slave ship *La Amistad*.