Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Greg Mack

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Mack, Greg

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Greg Mack,

Dates: July 2, 2014

Bulk Dates: 2014

Physical Description: 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:35:31).

Abstract: Radio host Greg Mack (1959 - ) is widely credited with pioneering the twenty-four hour rap format at KDAY-AM 1580, in Los Angeles, California. McMillion was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 2, 2014, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2014_199

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Radio host Greg Mack was born on June 22, 1959 in Emory, Texas. He was raised in Van Alstyne, Texas, and started in radio in 1975 as an intern with KTSA in San Antonio, Texas, while still in high school. Mack continued to work for KTSA after graduating from Van Alstyne High School in 1977.

While working at KTSA, Mack was hired part-time as the weekend DJ at KEYS/KZFM in Corpus Christi, Texas. Soon afterwards, he was given a full-time show. When a post at Majic 102 (KMJQ-FM) in Houston, Texas opened up in 1980, Mack was hired to host the six-to-ten shift. In 1983, Mack was named
music director at KDAY in Los Angeles, California, where he changed the
direction of the station by incorporating rap music. From his position at KDAY,
Mack promoted many that would become the most well-known artists of the mid-
1980s and early-1990s, such as Dr. Dre and the World Class Wreckin’ Cru,
N.W.A, Ice T, and many others. Eventually, KDAY’s popularity was eclipsed by
more powerful FM stations, and Mack moved on to Stevie Wonder-owned KJLH
in 1990.

After his time at KDAY and KJLH, Mack purchased several radio stations, and
acted as a radio station consultant. He signed a contract with MCA Records and
released a CD entitled “The Mixmasters.” He then signed with Motown, and in
1989, released a compilation album of hits played at KDAY titled “What Does It
All Mean?” He also released a three-CD compilation named “KDAY ‘Mack
Attack,’” highlighting his mixing crew the MixMasters, and featuring mix shows,
jingles, and show outtakes in 1997. He joined 94.7 the WAVE in 2013 as the
Saturday night DJ.

Mack has five children and six grandchildren.

Greg Mack was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 2, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Greg Mack was conducted by Larry Crowe on
July 2, 2014, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed
MOV digital video files. Radio host Greg Mack (1959 - ) is widely credited with
pioneering the twenty-four hour rap format at KDAY-AM 1580, in Los Angeles,
California.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of 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:

Mack, Greg
Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)
Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Mack, Greg--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)
The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection
Occupations:

Radio Host

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


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.
Greg Mack was born Gregory McMillan on June 22, 1959 in Emory, Texas, although the midwife incorrectly spelled it Greggory McMillion on the birth certificate. He spent his early years with his maternal grandparents, Hannah Bell McMillan and Neelan McMillan, and his mother, Willie Grace McMillan, in rural East Texas, where the family worked as tenant farmers growing cotton and raising livestock. Mack’s grandfather was altruistic, a trait Mack inherited from him. Mack’s mother worked as a domestic and he did not know his biological father. Mack’s earliest childhood memory is watching a Ford Mustang drive by the family house in Emory. He describes the sights, sounds and smells of his childhood, including spending most of his free time outdoors. Mack moved to Van Alstyne, Texas in the early 1960s after his mother met his stepfather, Monroe Everett. He entered Van Alstyne Elementary School in 1965. Mack has a sister and a younger stepbrother, Danny Everett, who was on the 1988 Olympics track team with Carl Lewis.
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Video Oral History Interview with Greg Mack, Section A2014_199_001_002, TRT: 2:26:53 2014/08/02

Greg Mack attended elementary school and began high school in Van Alstyne, Texas. He raised pigs as a young teenager for showing at the county fair. Mack first watched television and listened to the radio after moving to Van Alstyne in the early 1960s. Shows such as ‘Ironside’ and ‘Marcus Welby, M.D.’ influenced his early career aspirations. When Mack was thirteen years old, his parents, Willie Grace McMillan and Monroe Everett, moved to Los Angeles, California. He remained in Van Alstyne and took care of himself for several years before moving to San Antonio, Texas, where he lived with an aunt and uncle attended Fox Technical High School. Mack enjoyed a variety of sports and was the class clown. He also interned at KTSA radio in San Antonio. His family enjoyed listening to Mack speak as a child because his voice differed from the East Texas black dialect. At KTSA, the station manager encouraged him to lose his Texas accent. Mack explains his views on the Christian church.

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Greg Mack was hired by San Antonio, Texas’ KTSA radio in 1977 to work in the news department. Bernard Waterman, the station’s owner, paid Mack’s tuition to the Elkins Institute of Broadcasting in Dallas, Texas so that Mack could obtain a first-class license. Mack briefly attended San Antonio College before leaving KTSA and joining KEYS/KZFM in Corpus Christi, Texas. In 1980, he was hired on air at Majic 102.1 in Houston, Texas working the late night shift for three years; Mack boosted the station’s ratings. Majic 102.1 was Mack’s first experience working at a station that played black music. An interview with Charlie Wilson and Roger Troutman led to ‘Computer Love,’ a collaboration between the two artists. Mack left Majic 102.1 in 1983 to join KDAY radio in Los Angeles, California. As music director, he first added rap to the station’s music lineup and diversified KDAY’s offerings. He hired Dr. Dre, DJ Yella, and DJ Tony G in the mid-1980s to mix tracks for his Traffic Jam sessions.
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Video Oral History Interview with Greg Mack, Section A2014_199_001_004, TRT: 4:32:27 2014/08/02

Greg Mack worked with DJs Tony G., Jammin’ Gemini, and Joe Cooley at KDAY radio in Los Angeles, California. Mack often played new rappers, unreleased songs, and the B-sides of records, such as Salt N Pepa’s ‘Push It’ and Los Angeles artist Toddy Tee’s ‘Batterram.’ Through his Friday Night Live shows, which brought Mack to different Los Angeles venues, he developed relationships with various local gangs. After two gang related shootings, he talked about gun violence instead of playing music on KDAY. Mack describes talking backstage with Barry White and HistoryMaker Isaac Hayes as the most memorable moment of his career. He also once met Diana Ross and previewed a Michael Jackson record. In the late 1980s, he premiered N.W.A.’s record ‘Boy-n-the-Hood’ and did a voiceover on N.W.A.’s song ‘Radio.’ In 1985, he helped HistoryMaker Russell Simmons secure funding for Def Jam Recordings. During his seven year career at KDAY, Mack pioneered the rhythmic contemporary format.

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Video Oral History Interview with Greg Mack, Section A2014_199_001_005, TRT: 5:29:08 2014/08/02

Greg Mack produced two records, ‘The Mixmasters’ with MCA Records and ‘What Does It All Mean?’ with Motown, in the late 1980s. He left Los Angeles, California’s KDAY radio in 1990 to join Stevie Wonder’s KJLH station. KDAY’s sales had suffered from competition with local FM stations. At KJLH, Mack tripled ratings as host of the morning show. Mack purchased several California radio stations after leaving KJLH. He lost his first station when his business partners forced him to give up his ownership and resign. An investor’s ties to a drug dealer led to the demise of another station Mack owned in Fresno, California. In 1999, Mack founded Magnificent Communications and Magnificent Broadcasting, Incorporated, both of which failed. He joined Los Angeles’ The WAVE in 2013, which has allowed him to pursue other media projects. Mack talks about what he would have done differently in his life and reflects upon his legacy. He describes his hopes and concerns for the black community and the future of black radio.

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Video Oral History Interview with Greg Mack, Section A2014_199_001_006, TRT: 6:07:09 2014/08/02

Greg Mack talks about his family. He has participated in several historical documentaries, but plans someday to record his personal history and the history of Los Angeles, California’s KDAY radio station in book form. He concludes by describing how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Greg Mack, Section A2014_199_001_006, TRT: 6:07:09 2014/08/02

Greg Mack talks about his family. He has participated in several historical documentaries, but plans someday to record his personal history and the history of Los Angeles, California’s KDAY radio station in book form. He concludes by describing how he would like to be remembered.