

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Art Norman

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## 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>	Norman, Art
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Art Norman,
<b>Dates:</b>	October 21, 2014
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2014
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:05:08).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Broadcast journalist Art Norman (1947 - ) worked as a reporter, anchor and special contributor for Chicago's WMAQ-TV station for over thirty years. He received six Emmy Awards for his news coverage. Norman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 21, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2014_258
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Broadcast journalist Art Norman was born in New York City, New York. Norman graduated with his B.S. degree in math and physics from Johnson C. Smith University, where he was a member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. He has also received a first class F.C.C. engineer's license.

Norman began his broadcasting career in 1969 when he was hired as a television engineer at WCCB-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina. Throughout the 1970s, he worked as a reporter at WPCQ-TV and WSOC-TV, both located in Charlotte; and,

in 1976, he served as a writer and photographer on the George Foster Peabody Award winning edition of NBC's "Weekend Magazine." Norman was then hired as a reporter and weekend anchor for Baltimore, Maryland's WMAR-TV in 1979. In July of 1982, he joined WMAQ-TV NBC5 in Chicago, Illinois as a general assignment reporter. At WMAQ, Norman went on to cover breaking news, anchor broadcasts and cultivate community-oriented feature segments, including the popular "Art Norman's Chicago." He retired from WMAQ in 2009, but returned on a part-time basis as a special contributor in 2012.

Norman has received many awards throughout his career. He won North Carolina's RTNDA Award for his coverage of a fatal air balloon crash in 1975, and his documentary on the plight of poor children won a 1978 School Bell Award from the National Association of Educators. He received a 1984 International Radio and Television News Directors Award and a 1987 Wilbur Award; his hosted series, "Cops and Robbers," was honored with two prestigious awards: a national Investigative Reporters and Editors Award and an Associated Press Award for "Best Investigative Reporting." Norman was an integral part of NBC5's coverage of the Beirut hostage crisis, which earned him a 1986 Emmy Award. He also received Emmys for his contributions to NBC5's coverage of the Laurie Dann spot news story; his spot news coverage of the Fox River Grove Bus Crash; and his contribution to NBC5's coverage of the Chicago Auto Show. In all, Norman has earned six Emmy Awards.

Norman's involvement with the Chicago community has also been extensive. In addition to hosting numerous community events each year, he is a spokesman for the United Negro College Fund and serves as an on-air host of their telethon. He is also a frequent NBC 5 News ambassador.

Norman is married and lives in Evanston, Illinois.

Art Norman was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 21, 2014.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Art Norman was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 21, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Broadcast journalist Art Norman (1947 - ) worked as a reporter, anchor and special contributor for Chicago's WMAQ-TV station for over thirty years. He received six Emmy Awards for his news coverage.

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# 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Norman, Art

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Feldman, Isaac (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## **Occupations:**

Broadcast Journalist

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

MediaMakers

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## **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 Art Norman, October 21, 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

## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Art Norman, Section  
A2014\_258\_001\_001, TRT: 1:25:43 2014/10/21

Art Norman was born on September 6, 1947 in New York City to Mary Ball Norman and James Norman. His maternal grandfather, a steel worker in Bessemer, Alabama, was a victim of the Tuskegee experiments. His mother was born in Bessemer in 1922, and attended school through the eighth grade. Norman's paternal grandparents worked for the Bethlehem Steel Corporation in Birmingham, Alabama, where Norman's father was born in 1922. He and Norman's mother met in Alabama, and moved together to New York City's Harlem neighborhood in the 1930s. During World War II, Norman's mother worked as a riveter in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. His father served in the U.S. Naval Construction Battalions, and sustained injuries that led to paraplegia and an early death. After the war, Norman's mother worked at the Apollo Theater and as a hairdresser. She brought Norman and his twin brother, Lionel Norman, to the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, where they were exposed to civil rights leaders like Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Art Norman, Section  
A2014\_258\_001\_002, TRT: 2:26:03 2014/10/21

Art Norman's parents, Mary Ball Norman and James Norman, separated in 1955. His father moved to Lancaster, New York to be near his mother, Ruby Norman,

and sister, who was a manager at the Tonawanda Engine plant. There, he had a third child, Norman's stepbrother Butch Norman. Norman attended P.S. 186 and J.H.S. 43 in New York City. From an early age, he excelled in the arts, and had an interest in math. He was also fascinated by televisions and electronics, and attended Brooklyn Technical High School in Brooklyn, New York. He later transferred to Samuel Gompers Vocational and Technical High School in the Bronx, New York, where he graduated in 1966. During this time, Norman began repairing electronics professionally in Harlem. Through his mother, he became involved in the New York City Mission Society's Camp Minisink program. There, he met recent graduates of historically black universities, who encouraged him to leave New York City and enroll at a black college.

Video Oral History Interview with Art Norman, Section  
A2014\_258\_001\_003, TRT: 3:23:47 2014/10/21

Art Norman worked as a television repairman for one year after graduating from high school in New York City. He then enrolled at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he joined the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. He majored in math and physics, and learned FORTRAN under Professor Boyd Gatherright. With equipment donated by local radio stations, Norman built a carrier current radio station at the university, WJCS Radio, where he became a news anchor. He worked as a reporter and editor of The University Student newspaper, covering the activities of civil rights leaders like Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dick Gregory, Elijah Muhammad and Minister Louis Farrakhan. He also wrote a column about historically black colleges and universities for The Charlotte Observer. While a student, Norman married his first wife and started a family. Upon graduating, he worked as an engineer at Charlotte's WCCB-TV for one year, and then moved to WSOC, a radio and television station in the city.

Video Oral History Interview with Art Norman, Section  
A2014\_258\_001\_004, TRT: 4:26:31 2014/10/21

Art Norman started as an engineer at the WSOC broadcast station in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he read radio

newscasts on weekends. Eventually, he was offered a position as a full-time television reporter and field engineer. In this role, Norman was recognized for his coverage of a fatal hot air balloon crash, and received a Peabody Award with Lloyd Dobyns, Jr. for their investigative report on the Duke Energy Corporation's nuclear power plant. Encouraged by black news director Kirk Peters, Norman briefly worked at Charlotte's WRET-TV station, which was owned by Ted Turner. He then joined WMAR-TV in Baltimore, Maryland, where he befriended the emerging journalist Oprah Winfrey. During this time, Norman was active with the National Association of Black Journalists, serving as chapter president in Charlotte and Baltimore. In 1982, he joined WMAQ-TV in Chicago, Illinois, after meeting the station's executive producer, Teri Goudie, at a union demonstration in Baltimore.

Video Oral History Interview with Art Norman, Section  
A2014\_258\_001\_005, TRT: 5:26:20 2014/10/21

Art Norman join the staff of WMAQ-TV in Chicago, Illinois in 1982, during Harold Washington's first mayoral campaign. Norman reported on the election, and was assigned to cover Mayor Washington's administration alongside Chinta Strausberg, Clarence Page and Fred Rice, Jr. Also in 1982, Norman covered the trial of Andrew Wilson, who was accused of killing two policemen on the South Side. Norman called attention to the racial makeup of the jury, which eventually led to a retrial. Norman was mentored by Vernon Jarrett, Robert E. Johnson and John H. Johnson through the National Association of Black Journalists, and eventually became the chapter president in Chicago. In 1984, he received an award for his live coverage of a shooting in a family law court. Following Harold Washington's death, Norman worked with black journalists like Ken Smikle and Meldy Spann-Cooper to improve the representation of African Americans in the media. In 1989, he was recognized for his coverage of the Laurie Dann shootings.

Video Oral History Interview with Art Norman, Section  
A2014\_258\_001\_006, TRT: 6:31:00 2014/10/21

Art Norman worked as a reporter at WMAQ-TV in

Chicago, Illinois from 1982. In 1990, he initiated an investigation into civil rights violations by Cook County sheriff's deputies, after receiving a tip that the department was conducting public strip searches at nightclubs in black communities. The story drew widespread attention, and was recognized by the Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc. In 1997, station president Lyle Banks' decision to hire Jerry Springer resulted in widespread protests at WMAQ-TV. Following Banks' termination, Norman was asked to become a principal news anchor. Norman also developed a friendship with Barack Obama during the 1990s, and supported his early political campaigns. In 2002, he created a news segment called 'Beating the Odds,' later known as 'Art Norman's Chicago,' to highlight positive stories around the city. Norman mentored numerous students through the National Association of Black Journalists, including Evrod Cassimy, who became a news anchor in Detroit, Michigan.

Video Oral History Interview with Art Norman, Section  
A2014\_258\_001\_007, TRT: 7:25:44 2014/10/21

Art Norman endured threats of racial violence throughout his career in the broadcast industry. As a young reporter at WSOC-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina, he interviewed white supremacist David Duke at a Ku Klux Klan rally, and was threatened with a shotgun while attempting to interview a fireworks vendor. After moving to Chicago, Illinois, he withstood racist taunts while covering Harold Washington's mayoral campaigns. During the 2000s, Norman worked to bring attention to positive news stories, including the Chicago Bulls' youth mentorship programs, and a lung transplant recipient who completed the Hustle up the Hancock climb. Norman retired in 2009 to care for his wife, Ondina Outerbridge Norman, who was suffering from terminal brain cancer. In 2012, he married Terri Diggs Norman. At this point in the interview, Norman reflects upon his legacy and his role as a mentor and father. He concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.