

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gregory Baranco

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Baranco, Gregory, 1948-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Baranco,
Dates:	October 3, 2016
Bulk Dates:	2016
Physical Description:	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:25:44).
Abstract:	Auto sales entrepreneur Gregory Baranco (1948 -) founded Baranco Automotive Group, where he served as the president and CEO. Baranco was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 3, 2016, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2016_049
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Auto sales entrepreneur Gregory Baranco was born on March 8, 1948 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana to Dr. Beverly Victor Baranco, Jr. and Evelyn Baranco. Baranco attended Southern University in Baton Rouge, where he was a pre-med major until changing his focus to business administration after working at a stamping plant for the Ford Motor Company during the summer of 1969. He went on to graduate with his B.S. degree in business administration in 1971.

He began his career in sales at Audubon Ford in Baton Rouge in 1971, where he was eventually promoted to finance manager. During the mid-1970s, Baranco was accepted into the General Motors Dealer Development Program, where he trained as a GM dealership owner at Royal Oldsmobile in New Orleans, Louisiana. In 1978, Baranco and his wife, Juanita Baranco, founded Baranco Pontiac, Inc., which began as a dealership in East Point, Georgia, and then relocated to Decatur, Georgia in 1981. During the 1980s, Baranco became one of the lead developers for Sandstone Shores, a 66-home residential development in a predominantly African American community in Decatur, Georgia. Baranco turned his focus to luxury cars, acquiring an Acura dealership in Tallahassee, Florida in 1988 that he later moved to Atlanta, Georgia; and then opened the Mercedes-Benz of Buckhead dealership in Atlanta in 2001, in partnership with his wife and former mayor Andrew Young. When First Southern Bank in Atlanta was founded in 1988, Baranco served as the first chairman of its board. In 1997, he worked with Citizens Trust Bank of Atlanta and its chairman Herman Russell to negotiate a merger between the two banks, and stayed on as vice chairman of the newly merged bank until 2003.

Baranco was honored as a Best of the Best Dealer of the Year by Mercedes-Benz USA in 2012, and given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers in 2010. He served as president of the Metropolitan Atlanta Automobile Dealers Association and chairman of the Atlanta Life Insurance Company, in addition to his longtime memberships at One Hundred Black Men of Dekalb County, the United Way and the Dekalb County Task Force on Efficiency in Government. He also received an honorary doctorate from Southern University.

Baranco and his wife, Juanita Baranco, have four children: Evelyn, Grene, Janelle, and Gregory, Jr.

Gregory Baranco was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 3, 2016.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gregory Baranco was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 3, 2016, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Auto sales entrepreneur Gregory Baranco (1948 -) founded Baranco Automotive Group, where he served as the president and CEO.

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:

Baranco, Gregory, 1948-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Baranco, Gregory, 1948- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Auto Sales Entrepreneur

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 Gregory Baranco, October 3, 2016. 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 Gregory Baranco, Section A2016_049_001_001, TRT: 1:29:07 ?

Gregory Baranco was born on March 10, 1948 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana to Evelyn Edmond Baranco and Beverly V. Baranco, Jr. His paternal ancestors lived in Cuba until his great-grandfather migrated to Louisiana. In New Orleans, Baranco's paternal grandfather, Beverly V. Baranco, Sr., became an attorney

and the president of the Peoples Life Insurance Company of Louisiana. Baranco's father attended Southern University in Baton Rouge, and then studied dentistry at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. He later helped Felton Grandison Clark develop the First Federal Savings and Loan Association. Baranco's mother attended Fisk University in Nashville, and went on to teach math and English. Her brother, Maurice A. Edmond, founded the annual livestock fair at Southern University. Baranco was raised in the majority-black professional community of South Baton Rouge. As a child, he often joined his mother on her drive to Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans, where she received her master's degree.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Baranco, Section A2016_049_001_002, TRT: 2:29:01 ?

Gregory Baranco grew up in the predominantly black South Baton Rouge community of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He was the third youngest of eight children. He began his education at St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, and went on to attend the Southern University Laboratory School. After completing his freshman year at Baton Rouge's McKinley Senior High School, Baranco became one of five students to integrate Baton Rouge's Catholic High School. He faced repeated acts of racial violence and discrimination there, and returned to Southern University Laboratory School for his senior year. At this point in the interview, Baranco talks about his classmate, H. Rap Brown. Aspiring to a career in medicine, Baranco started his undergraduate pre-medical coursework at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1965. He later transferred to Southern University in Baton Rouge, where he met his future wife, Juanita Baranco, and decided to pursue a career in the automotive sales industry.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Baranco, Section A2016_049_001_003, TRT: 3:30:49 ?

Gregory Baranco began his bachelor's degree in 1965 at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Frustrated by his white peers' racist behavior, Baranco left the school during his second semester. The following summer, his mother, Evelyn Edmond Baranco, passed away. Baranco went on to attend Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he was active in the student protest movement. Around this time, he met and married Juanita Baranco, who was a student at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. Baranco interned with the Ford Motor Company at the Ford River Rouge Complex in Dearborn, Michigan. Then, he was hired as a retail salesman at Gwin Montgomery's Audubon Ford dealership in Baton Rouge, where he was promoted to finance manager in 1969. In this role, Baranco worked closely with Louisiana National Bank executive Russell Dunn, who later joined Baranco's business. In 1978, Baranco was recruited by George Habersetzer, a Motors Holding Division manager, to open a dealership in Atlanta, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Baranco, Section A2016_049_001_004, TRT: 4:32:58 ?

Gregory Baranco completed the General Motors Corporation's minority automotive dealer training program in 1980. He then acquired Smith-Johnson Pontiac, Inc. in East Point, Georgia, which he renamed Baranco Pontiac, Inc. In subsequent years, Baranco moved the dealership to Decatur, Georgia, and acquired a private airplane for his business travels. He also confronted the General Motors Corporation over their discriminatory financing practices. Hoping to diversify the automotive sales profession, Baranco hired women and people of color, and mentored aspiring dealers like Ed Hardnett. His wife, Juanita Baranco, worked in the attorney general's offices of Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Atlanta, Georgia. From the 1990s, she helped operate the Baranco Automotive Group, which expanded to include five dealerships. Baranco worked on the planning and development team for the Saturn brand, and served

as president of the General Motors Minority Dealers Association and the Metro Atlanta Automobile Dealers Association.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Baranco, Section A2016_049_001_005, TRT: 5:23:49 ?

Gregory Baranco opened Baranco Pontiac, Inc. in Decatur, Georgia during the early 1980s. The facility had an expansive campus layout and was designed to use passive solar heat, which was environmentally friendly and cost effective. Baranco went on to establish several more dealerships, including Mercedes-Benz of Buckhead in Atlanta, Georgia. Although he was in competition with them, Baranco worked closely with the owners of the five other Mercedes-Benz dealerships in the metropolitan Atlanta area. In addition to his career in the automotive industry, Baranco created two residential development projects in DeKalb County, Georgia: Sandstone Shores and Sandstone Estates. He and his wife, Juanita Baranco, had four children. At this point, Baranco talks about the future of automotive technology, such as self-driving cars. He describes his advice to aspiring African American entrepreneurs, and his hopes and concerns for the black community. Baranco concludes the interview by reflecting upon his life and legacy.