

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gary E. Gardner

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gardner, Gary E., 1954-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gary E. Gardner,
Dates:	July 13, 2019
Bulk Dates:	2019
Physical Description:	9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:07:05).
Abstract:	Hair care manufacturer Gary Gardner (1954 -) served as president of Soft Sheen Products, Inc from 1985 to 1996, before founding hair care company, Namaste Laboratories, in 1996 and private equity firm, P.F.G., LLC, in 2014. Gardner was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 13, 2019, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2019_060
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Hair care manufacturer Gary Gardner was born on August 22, 1954 in Chicago, Illinois to Edward and Bettian Gardner. He graduated from the University of Illinois, Chicago with his B.A. degree in pre-law in 1975, and then attended Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where he earned both his J.D. and M.M. degrees in 1982.

In 1964, at age ten, Gardner began working for the family business, Soft Sheen Products, Inc., packaging hair care items with his younger sister in the family's home in Chicago. After graduating from Northwestern in 1982, Gardner rejoined Soft Sheen Products, Inc. and transitioned to president in 1985, succeeding his father, Ed Gardner, who remained as chairman. He served as president until 1996, when he stepped down to pursue his own ethnic hair care company in Chicago called Namaste Laboratories, with his wife, Denise. In 1999, Gardner and his wife launched their own philanthropic organization, the Gary and Denise Family Foundation, which focused on youth participation in the arts. Namaste Laboratories was later bought by the Indian consumer goods producer, Dabur India Ltd., in 2010, and Gardner remained with his management team to continue running the laboratory. In 2014, Gardner co-founded a private equity firm based out of Chicago called P.F.G., LLC, where he also served as president. The following year, Gardner and his wife established the Denise and Gary Gardner Scholarship at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2015 to assist undergraduate students' education at the Art Institute, primarily those from the South Side.

Gardner has been a member of the American Health and Beauty Aids Institute, and during his time as president of Soft Sheen, the company received several awards, including being ranked sixth on *Black Enterprise's* top 100 service industry companies in 1987 and, two years later, receiving the title of the Company of the Year by *Black Enterprise*.

Gardner and his wife reside in Chicago, Illinois, where they run the Gary and Denise Family Foundation and maintain a private art collection. The couple was awarded the Art Alliance of Illinois' Citizen's Advocate Award

in 2018.

Gary Gardner was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 13, 2019.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gary E. Gardner was conducted by Harriette Cole on July 13, 2019, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Hair care manufacturer Gary Gardner (1954 -) served as president of Soft Sheen Products, Inc from 1985 to 1996, before founding hair care company, Namaste Laboratories, in 1996 and private equity firm, P.F.G., LLC, in 2014.

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:

Gardner, Gary E., 1954-

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Gardner, Gary E., 1954---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Hair Care Manufacturer

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers|StyleMakers

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 Gary E. Gardner, July 13, 2019. 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 Gary E. Gardner, Section A2019_060_001_001, TRT: 1:28:31 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Gary E. Gardner, Section A2019_060_001_002, TRT: 2:30:40 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Gary E. Gardner, Section A2019_060_001_003, TRT: 3:32:46 ?

- Video Oral History Interview with Gary E. Gardner, Section A2019_060_001_004, TRT: 4:25:09 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Gary E. Gardner, Section A2019_060_001_005, TRT: 5:28:35 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Gary E. Gardner, Section A2019_060_001_006, TRT: 6:30:37 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Gary E. Gardner, Section A2019_060_001_007, TRT: 7:29:30 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Gary E. Gardner, Section A2019_060_001_008, TRT: 8:28:29 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Gary E. Gardner, Section A2019_060_001_009, TRT: 9:12:48 ?