

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with William G. Mays

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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>	Mays, William G., 1945-2014
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with William G. Mays,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 10, 2000
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2000
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:40:17).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Corporate chief executive William G. Mays (1945 - 2014 ) was the founder of Mays Chemical Company, which specialized in providing chemical products to the food, pharmaceutical and automotive industries. Mays Chemical Company began as a one man operation but grew to include facilities in Indianapolis, Chicago, Detroit and Cincinnati. Mays also owned The Indianapolis Recorder and was the former majority owner of the Hoosier Radio and Television Properties. Mays was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 10, 2000, in Indianapolis, Indiana. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2000_030
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The son of two schoolteachers, William G. Mays was born in Evansville, Indiana on December 4th, 1945. Mays graduated from Evansville Lincoln High School in 1963 and then went on to Indiana University in Bloomington, where he majored in Chemistry. In 1970, William Mays was offered a Consortium Fellowship for advanced studies. He accepted the award and applied it to graduate studies in Marketing and Finance at Indiana University, from which he received an M.B.A. in 1973.

After graduating Mays worked at Cummins Engine Company in Columbus, Indiana, for four years where he served as Assistant to the President. Mays was then offered the opportunity to be President of Specialty Chemicals, a small distribution company in Indianapolis. During his three years as President, he increased the company's sales from \$300,000 to over \$5 million. William Mays left Specialty Chemicals in 1980 and became an entrepreneur after founding his own business, Mays Chemical Company. Mays Chemical Company, Inc., which specializes in providing chemical products to the food, pharmaceutical and automotive industries, began in 1980 as a one-person operation. Mr. Mays processed and filled each order himself. Over the years, however, the company has grown to include facilities in Indianapolis, Chicago, Detroit and Cincinnati. Mays Chemical Company has won numerous awards for excellence.

William Mays also owns The Indianapolis Recorder and is the former majority owner of the Hoosier Radio and Television Properties, which include WAV-TV53, HOT 96.3 FM, WGGR 106.7 FM and WIRE. He has significant interests in several other small businesses, including a property management firm, several golf courses and construction companies. In 1995, William Mays enjoyed, the exceptional honor of carrying the Olympic flame through Indianapolis.

Mays passed away on December 4, 2014.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with William G. Mays was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on July 10, 2000, in Indianapolis, Indiana, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Corporate chief executive William G. Mays (1945 - 2014 ) was the founder of Mays Chemical Company, which specialized in providing chemical products to the food, pharmaceutical and automotive industries. Mays Chemical Company began as a one man operation but grew to include facilities in Indianapolis, Chicago, Detroit and Cincinnati. Mays also owned The Indianapolis Recorder and was the former majority owner of the Hoosier Radio and Television Properties.

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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:

Mays, William G., 1945-2014

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Mays, William G., 1945-2014--Interviews

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African American businesspeople--Indiana--Indianapolis--Interviews

African American executives--Indiana--Indianapolis--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Business Chief Executive

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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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 William G. Mays, July 10, 2000. 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).

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## 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 William G. Mays, Section A2000\_030\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:48  
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William G. Mays describes his family background. His father, Theodore C. Mays, was born in Malvern, Arkansas to a Methodist minister. He attended Shorter College in Little Rock, Arkansas in the 1930s, and taught chemistry at Philander Smith College after graduating, where he met his wife, Joy J. Mays. A teacher, Joy Mays was raised in Indiana. Both Mays' received their M.A. degrees from Indiana University in the 1940s. They had three sons that they raised in Evansville, Indiana: twins Ted and Bob, and William. Though William G. Mays, was extremely studious as a youth, his earliest memories include playing football and damaging his parents' new car. He had trouble fitting in with youth his age due to his upper middle class upbringing, and his father teaching at his high school. Mays attended the all-black Lincoln high school, but graduated from integrated Evansville Central High School in 1963. He went on to pursue a B.S. degree in chemistry from Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana.

African American businesspeople--Indiana--Indianapolis--Interviews.

African American executives--Indiana--Indianapolis--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with William G. Mays, Section A2000\_030\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:36  
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During his sophomore year of college at Indiana University in 1964, William G. Mays' father, Theodore Mays, passed away, influencing him to become more disciplined as a student. He left Indiana University to attend the University of Evansville for a few months, and re-enrolled at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana in 1965. Outside of his studies, Mays was a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Mays married his high school sweetheart Rose Mays, a nurse, and graduated from Indiana University with his B.S. degree in chemistry, in 1968. Mays worked as a test chemist for six months before taking a job with Proctor and Gamble as a salesperson. He excelled in this position, and was impacted by the ways in which the company dealt with racism in the field. Mays left Proctor and Gamble in 1971, and enrolled in business school at Indiana University. After graduating with his M.B.A. in 1973, Mays accepted a position as assistant to the President of Cummins Engine Company in Columbus, Indiana.

Video Oral History Interview with William G. Mays, Section A2000\_030\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:28  
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William G. Mays began working as assistant to the President of Cummins Engine Company in 1974. Mays excelled and built a strong professional network within the company, where he rose to a middle management position by 1977. Mays was offered a position as President of Specialty Chemicals in 1977, and moved to Indianapolis, Indiana with his wife and two children. The skill sets and relationships Mays developed at Cummins Engine Company proved critical to growing Specialty Chemical; by the time Mays left Specialty Chemicals in 1977, he had increased sales from a few hundred thousand dollars to \$5 million. After facing challenges with the President of Chemical Investors, Specialty Chemicals' overarching company, Mays' resigned from his position and set out to found Mays Chemical Company in 1980. He received tremendous support from a number of companies, including Upjohn, Abbott Laboratories, Eli Lilly, and Superior Solvents, which led to the swift growth of Mays Chemical Company.

Video Oral History Interview with William G. Mays, Section A2000\_030\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:05

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William G. Mays founded Mays Chemical Company in 1980. He talks about the entrepreneurial vision that led to the company's growth, and the company's early years. Mays Chemical Company achieved \$9 million in sales by the end of its third fiscal year, and doubled from \$100 million to \$200 million in sales from 1990 to 2000. Given its swift growth, the company was featured in the Small Business section of the Wall Street Journal in 1983. Though Mays has maintained a focus on developing partnerships with other chemical distributors, he led Mays Chemical to acquire Specialty Chemical and United Chemical in the 1980s. Mays purchased the Indianapolis Recorder in 1995, and was majority owner of Hoosier Radio and Television Properties, as well. Mays talks about the state of minority-owned businesses and the evolution of black entrepreneurs. He also talks about black entrepreneurs he admires, including Cathy Hughes, Alfred Liggins, and Bob Johnson.

Video Oral History Interview with William G. Mays, Section A2000\_030\_001\_005, TRT: 0:15:42

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William G. Mays talks about his investments and philanthropic work. In addition to investing in golf courses and golf course housing developments, Mays is partial owner of a high-end boat sales company, a TGI Fridays Restaurant, and nearly sixteen other companies. Mays Chemical Company regularly contributes five percent of its pre-tax profit to charities, while Mays contributes nearly \$50,000 to charitable causes each year. He also helped establish the Minority Key Club of Indianapolis; has served with the United Way; and founded the Mays Family Foundation. Mays talks about the importance of minority economic development in America, as well as his business philosophy. Mays concludes the interview by talking about his father, Theodore C. Mays, his legacy, and the future of black entrepreneurs.

Video Oral History Interview with William G. Mays, Section A2000\_030\_001\_006, TRT: 0:24:38

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William G. Mays narrates his photographs