

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable John Allen

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Allen, John D., 1943-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable John Allen,
Dates:	March 11, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:45:36).
Abstract:	Superior court judge The Honorable John Allen (1943 -) was appointed Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit Superior Court judge in 1993 and has held appointments as a city attorney, a Recorder's Court judge and State Court judge. Allen was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 11, 2002, in Columbus, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_012
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Superior court judge Hon. John Allen was born on January 17, 1943 in Columbus, Georgia to Beatrice and Daniel Allen. Allen distinguished himself in the United States Air Force before becoming a significant jurist serving as a Superior Court Judge in Georgia.

Allen graduated from Tuskegee University in 1966 with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering. R.O.T.C. designated him a "Distinguished Military Cadet," and he was awarded a commission as a regular officer in the U.S.A.F. As such, Allen gained top secret clearance, piloted an F-4 Phantom Jet-Fighter and taught both academics and flight. He served two tours in Southeast Asia and was decorated repeatedly, earning five Distinguished Flying Crosses, 23 Air Medals and two Air Force Commendation Medals among others. In 1973, Captain Allen was honorably discharged.

Continuing his education, Allen worked towards an M.S. degree at the University of South Florida, but discontinued those studies to pursue a law degree. He received a J.D. from the University of Florida in 1975. Allen maintained a private law practice in Columbus, Georgia and gained extensive civil and criminal trial experience. He worked as a city attorney for Geneva, Georgia and then as a Recorder's Court Judge in Columbus. In 1987, Allen became a State Court Judge and held that position until 1993, when he was appointed to be the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit Superior Court Judge. He continues to serve the six counties in his jurisdiction.

Allen acts as a mentor to newly appointed or elected State Court Judges, a position for which he was selected by the Institute for Continuing Judicial Education of Georgia. The Georgia Supreme Court selected him to work on the "Court Futures Vanguard," drafting proposals to prepare Georgia's courts for the future. Allen has also served as a member of the Columbus Airport Commission, the Columbus High School Vocational Education Advisory Board, the Urban League Board of Directors, the Area Ten Special Olympics Advisory Board and the African American Historic Preservation Society, among other civic organizations. He has three children.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable John Allen was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on March 11, 2002, in Columbus, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Superior court judge The Honorable John Allen (1943 -) was appointed Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit Superior Court judge in 1993 and has held appointments as a city attorney, a Recorder's Court judge and State Court judge.

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:

Allen, John D., 1943-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Allen, John D., 1943---Interviews

Congress of Racial Equality.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Georgia

Occupations:

Superior Court Judge

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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 The Honorable John Allen, March 11, 2002. 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 The Honorable John Allen, Section A2002_012_001_001, TRT: 0:27:10 ?

John Allen talks about his family background. His mother, Beatrice Allen, born in Columbus, Georgia, only had a fifth grade education and gave birth to her first child around the age of twelve. She worked as a domestic, managed a night club, and also owned an alteration shop, which was frequented by Maynard Jackson, Marvin Arrington, and Gordon Joynor. Allen's father, Daniel Allen worked as a porter, janitor, and truck driver. After his parents separated when Allen was a boy, his mother raised him and his six sisters. Allen grew up in a housing project in Columbus, and has fond memories of his neighborhood and the black community. In his youth, Allen was a gregarious child, who excelled academically, but also participated in gang activity. Allen talks about racial segregation and his grade school years. He also chronicles the slow economic development of Columbus, Georgia, originally a textile town.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable John Allen, Section A2002_012_001_002, TRT: 0:30:04 ?

John Allen graduated from Tuskegee Institute in 1966 with a B.S. in mechanical engineering. Influential teachers in grade school and a natural affinity for math led him to major in engineering. During his college years, Allen received a yearly stipend from the State of Georgia for not integrating the Georgia Institute of Technology. From his early youth, Allen dreamt of flying; at Tuskegee, he signed up for the ROTC and learned to fly. He also became a student activist in The Civil Rights Movement, co-founding the Tuskegee Institute Advancement League, recruiting Malcolm X to speak on campus, and joining the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March. The summer before his senior year in 1965, Allen worked at IBM. After graduation, he enlisted with the U.S. Air Force where he experienced racial discrimination, and served as a pilot in the Vietnam War.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable John Allen, Section A2002_012_001_003, TRT: 0:29:29 ?

John Allen served as a fighter pilot in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War. During his seven years in the military [1966-1973], he served two tours of duty and flew hundreds of missions without any fear. Emotionally removed from the deaths he caused, the war did not impact him until he left the service. Allen talks about the racism he experienced in the U.S. Air Force, a catch-22 during his first tour of duty, and how he felt a burden to succeed as a representative of the black community. Although his excellence as a fighter pilot won him many distinctions including five Distinguished Flying Crosses, twenty-three Air Medals, and two Air Force Commendations, Allen chose to leave the military because of the racism he encountered. After his war service, Allen graduated from the University of Florida with a J.D. degree in 1975.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable John Allen, Section A2002_012_001_004, TRT: 0:29:29 ?

John Allen worked as an instructor pilot after he left the U.S. Air Force before entering law school at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. In law school, Allen turned down job offers from major airlines who wanted to hire him as a pilot, but not as a lawyer. After he received a J.D. degree in 1975, Allen returned to Columbus, Georgia where his decorated military record helped in others' acceptance of him. In Columbus, a town with few black professionals, he successfully established a law career. Allen started Columbus' first integrated law firm and gained a reputation as an activist lawyer before becoming a judge in Muscogee County, Georgia. Allen talks about becoming a judge to serve the community and create a fairer judicial process. He also talks about challenges he has faced as a judge.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable John Allen, Section A2002_012_001_005, TRT:

0:31:06 ?

talks about his work to improve race relations in the Columbus, Georgia community and difficult decisions he has made as a judge. He describes his mother, Beatrice Allen, who was viewed by well-known politicians in Georgia like Marvin Arrington and Gordon Joyner as a talented seamstress. Allen also talks about his mother's influence in his own life. Allen comes from a tight-knit family and enjoys the support of his siblings. He reflects on his hopes and concerns for the African American community, the future of the South, and his legacy. Allen also narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable John Allen, Section A2002_012_001_006, TRT: 0:18:18 ?

John Allen narrates his photographs