

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Barbara Heineback

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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>	Heineback, Barbara, 1944-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Heineback,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 2, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:41:46).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Public relations executive Barbara Heineback (1944 - ) owns a public relations and communications firm, Talking Point, and was the first African American press officer, working under First Lady Rosalynn Carter. Heineback was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 2, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_181
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Barbara Heineback was born in New York City on December 29, 1944; she went on to make history by becoming the first African American woman to serve as a press officer to a First Lady.

Heineback attended Howard University where she received her B.A. degree in journalism from the school of communications. From there, Heineback went on to attend the University of Stockholm in Sweden where she received a certificate of Language Arts in Swedish. She married Swedish Foreign Service officer Bo Heineback who later served as Swedish ambassador to several countries. She gave birth to their son in 1973.

Upon returning to the United States, Heineback made history by becoming the first African American woman to serve as a press officer to former First Lady Rosalynn Carter. From there, Heineback went on to become the director of public relations and later, the public and investor relations director for Comsat, a communications satellite corporation. Next, Heineback served as the director of development for Scripps Memorial Hospital, where she was credited with raising significant funding for the hospital. From there, Heineback went on to become the chief of protocol for the America's Cup, an international sailing race. In 1996, Heineback launched her firm, Talking Point, to manage the marketing and communications needs of several prominent clients. Heineback served as a consultant through her firm to non-profit, corporate, and private clients around the globe. Heineback also served as a strategic consultant for President Bill Clinton's Administration; the NAACP; Scripps Healthcare; Silicon Graphics; Biotech; the Bi-national Emergency Medical Care Committee; and the San Francisco Library.

Heineback published a newspaper column for the *Savannah Morning News*, as well as a number of social and political commentary articles for other papers. She served on the board of directors of Frederick County Mental Health Association; the International Eye Foundation; the San Francisco World Affairs Council; and the San Francisco Foreign Affairs Committee.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Barbara Heineback was conducted by Jodi Merriday on August 2, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Public relations executive Barbara Heineback (1944 - ) owns a public relations and communications firm, Talking Point, and was the first African American press officer, working under First Lady Rosalynn Carter.

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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:

Heineback, Barbara, 1944-

Merriday, Jodi (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Heineback, Barbara, 1944- --Interviews

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Press secretaries--Interviews

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Public relations consultants--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:

Public Relations Executive

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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 Barbara Heineback, August 2, 2005. 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 Barbara Heineback, Section A2005\_181\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:13 ?

Barbara Heineback was born on December 29, 1944 in New York City. Her mother, Robella Wilson Taylor, was born in 1907 in Waldo, Florida to Cindy

Wilson and Isaac Wilson, a man from the South Pacific Islands rumored to be on the run from legal trouble. While working as a nanny, Heineback's mother hid her late-night reading from her employers who disapproved of her education. Heineback's father, John Taylor, was born in 1907 in Leesburg, Georgia. He was very intelligent and capable, though he regretted having to leave school in the fourth grade. His mother remarried after his father died. Heineback grew up on Port Washington, Long Island with her brother, Barry Taylor. They traveled to her paternal grandparents' farm in Georgia to visit extended family on holidays, which they celebrated with special dishes such as roast suckling pig and her grandmother's spice cake. When she was young, she wanted to research her family tree, but her great-aunt passed away before Heineback could record her stories about slavery.

Press secretaries--Interviews

Public relations consultants--Interviews

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Heineback, Section A2005\_181\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Barbara Heineback attended a Catholic school until third grade when she entered Sands Point Elementary School in Port Washington, New York. Recognizing her struggles with dyslexia, a sympathetic English teacher let Heineback submit oral presentations instead of essays. Growing up in a nearly all-white neighborhood, she enjoyed playing outside with her brother and friends. Her father worked as a caretaker for a wealthy Wall Street broker, was a deacon at Port Washington Baptist Church and supported the NAACP. After graduating from John Philip Sousa Junior High, Heineback entered Forest Hills High School in Queens, New York. Her father's retirement plans for buying his family's farm were nearly dashed when his elderly mother mistakenly sold it to someone else; however, he was able to buy it back at cost. In the years before his death, Heineback and her father bonded over bourbon and late night chats during Christmas visits. She compares the birthing customs in Sweden with those in the U.S.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Heineback, Section A2005\_181\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:25 ?

Barbara Heineback, as a mischievous yet friendly child, was influenced by her father's advice to be self-reliant. Her piano teacher's travels and stories sparked Heineback's desire to see the rest of the world. After a year at American University in Washington, D.C., Heineback transferred to Howard University, earning her bachelor's degree in English and television communications while Tony Brown was dean of the School of Communications. While completing a full course load her senior year, Heineback also worked full-time as an assistant for CBS News' 'Face the Nation.' After graduating in 1972, she married Bo Heineback, and the couple moved to Stockholm, Sweden for his job as a Swedish Foreign Service officer. Heineback's son, Erik Heineback, was born shortly afterwards. Dissatisfied as a homemaker, she amicably divorced her husband and took her young son back to the U.S. On a trip to Atlanta, Georgia with her friend, Representative John White, she was introduced to the Carter/Mondale presidential campaign.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Heineback, Section A2005\_181\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:44 ?

Barbara Heineback, after an impromptu interview, was initially offered a job as an advance agent for the presidential campaign of Jimmy Carter. Later that evening, the campaign staff asked her to do advance work for his wife instead. Realizing that the second position was a better opportunity, Heineback accepted

and was immediately sent to campaign sites around the U.S. Though learning on the job proved challenging, she was quick to overcome mishaps on the campaign trail. After Carter's election, she returned to Albany, Georgia, where she had been offered a position at WALB-TV. After her job offer was unfairly rescinded due to company politics, Heineback set her sights on Washington, D.C. She was hired as press officer for First Lady Rosalynn Carter. Heineback was the first African American woman to serve in this role, where she scheduled press coverage and photo opportunities, wrote press briefings and encountered legendary journalist and presidential correspondent Helen Thomas.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Heineback, Section A2005\_181\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:42 ?

Barbara Heineback met her first husband, a Swedish Foreign Service officer, through a Swedish attaché she interviewed for her job at CBS News. She recalls the challenges they faced as an interracial couple in the early 1970s. Heineback served as First Lady Rosalynn Carter's press officer for three a little over years. During that time, she handled difficult public relations situations while traveling frequently. Shortly before the onset of President Jimmy Carter's reelection campaign, she stepped down as press officer to work on the first lady's mental health initiatives and other projects, which allowed her to remain in Washington, D.C. with her young son. After the Carter presidency, she handled public relations for the communications satellite firm COMSAT in D.C. A brief second marriage brought her to California, where she worked as a fundraiser for Scripps Memorial Hospital in La Jolla after the divorce. In 1996, Heineback launched her own marketing and communications firm, Bee Talking Point.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Heineback, Section A2005\_181\_001\_006, TRT: 0:17:27 ?

Barbara Heineback continually sought out new learning opportunities throughout her career. This led to her declining a more lucrative job offer in favor of a more challenging position with a biotech company in Silicon Valley, California. In reflecting upon the challenges she faced as a single mother pursuing a career, she notes that she has no regrets in stepping down as press officer for First Lady Rosalynn Carter in order to spend more time with her young son. She offers advice for those aspiring to a career in public relations and talks about her future plans, which include traveling the world and writing about her experiences. She describes her concerns for the African American community and for the rampant inequality she sees in the U.S. Heineback talks about her personal values and the importance of history. She concludes by reflecting upon her legacy and how she hopes to be remembered.