

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ralph Tyler

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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>	Tyler, Ralph, 1950-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Tyler,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 22, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:49:40).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Engineering executive Ralph Tyler (1950 - ) was president and CEO of Ralph Tyler Companies, founded by his father Ralph C. Tyler in 1978. Prior to joining his father's engineering business, Tyler served as executive director of the Greater Cleveland Roundtable. Tyler was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 22, 2006, in Cleveland, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_047
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Ralph Sheldon Tyler, CEO and president of Ralph Tyler Companies and the son of the founder Ralph C. Tyler and Mabel Sandra Tyler, was born on June 30, 1950 in Cleveland, Ohio. Tracing his ancestors back to slavery through the 1700's, Tyler is a descendent of James Seneca Tyler, the first African American elected clerk of the Ohio House of Representatives. Tyler's grandfather, Ralph M. Tyler, was an engineer as was his father, Ralph C. Tyler, a former captain of the Ohio State University Track Team, who attended Cleveland's Central High School with Langston Hughes. Ralph C. Tyler was the first licensed black civil engineer in Ohio and formed Ralph Tyler Companies in 1978.

Tyler grew up in Cleveland where he attended Miles Standish Elementary School, Moses Cleveland School, Howe Military School and graduated from Shaker Heights High School in 1968. He earned his B.A. degree from Ohio University and his J.D. degree from Case Western Reserve University Law School in 1974.

Tyler's professional career includes positions with Citibank in New York City and TRW in Cleveland where responsibilities ranged from managing state government relations to overseeing legal and regulatory matters. Prior to joining his father's business, Tyler served as executive director of the Greater Cleveland Roundtable where he coordinated the group's activities in education, labor management, race relations and minority economic development.

As CEO and president of Ralph Tyler Companies, Tyler has contributed to the Cleveland community through development projects like the Cleveland Public Library, the Federal Courthouse, the Hopkins Airport expansion and the Cleveland Browns Stadium. The firm has offices in Detroit, Newark, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Toledo. Ralph Tyler Companies is a two time recipient of the Weatherhead 100 Award from Case Western Reserve University. A volunteer for a number of causes in Cleveland, Tyler gives six to seven minority scholarships to

young engineering students each year.

Residing in the Cleveland area, Tyler is married to a direct descendent of black inventor, Garrett A. Morgan.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ralph Tyler was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 22, 2006, in Cleveland, Ohio, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Engineering executive Ralph Tyler (1950 - ) was president and CEO of Ralph Tyler Companies, founded by his father Ralph C. Tyler in 1978. Prior to joining his father's engineering business, Tyler served as executive director of the Greater Cleveland Roundtable.

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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:

Tyler, Ralph, 1950-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Tyler, Ralph, 1950- --Interviews

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African American executives--Ohio--Cleveland--Interviews

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African American engineers--Ohio--Cleveland--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:

Engineering 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 Ralph Tyler, March 22, 2006. 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 Ralph Tyler, Section A2006\_047\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:07 ?

Ralph Tyler was born on June 30, 1950 in Cleveland, Ohio to Mabel Webb Tyler and Ralph C. Tyler. Ralph's mother was born in Pendleton, South Carolina and raised in New York City. She attended Hampton University and New York University, and became a teacher. Tyler's father was born in Guthrie, Oklahoma. Tyler's paternal grandfather, Ralph M. Tyler, was an engineer and a professor at Langston University in Oklahoma. Tyler descended from the McAfee family in Virginia. His ancestors were prominent figures in Ohio: James Seneca Tyler was the first African American elected as clerk of the Ohio House of Representatives; Waldo W. Tyler owned multiple pharmacies in Columbus; Tyler's great-grandfather, Ralph Waldo Tyler, was a journalist during World War I, covering President Warren Gamaliel Harding's elections, and was a great supporter of W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington. Tyler's great-uncle, Harold Tyler, worked with Thurgood Marshall, and Tyler's uncle, Waldo Tyler, was a journalist.

African American executives--Ohio--Cleveland--Interviews.

African American engineers--Ohio--Cleveland--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Tyler, Section A2006\_047\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:25 ?

Ralph Tyler's great-grandfather, Ralph Waldo Tyler, a friend of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, wrote about the riots that followed World War I and reported his findings to the U.S. government. Tyler's grandfather, Ralph M. Tyler, was Cleveland's Majestic Hotel's manager, where Tyler's father, Ralph C. Tyler, worked as a busboy and bellhop, and his childhood friends were Mayor Carl Stokes and Louis Stokes. Tyler's grandfather studied engineering at Carnegie Institute of Technology and taught at Langston University in Oklahoma. Tyler's parents met in Cleveland at a social function. They dated long distance until marrying and settling in Cleveland, where Tyler's mother taught in the public schools for thirty years. In the early 1950s, Tyler's father became the State of Ohio's first licensed African American civil engineer surveyor. In 1978, Tyler's father founded Ralph C. Tyler P.E. P.S., Inc. Tyler describes his parents' personalities and recalls attending Howe Military Academy in Howe, Indiana.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Tyler, Section A2006\_047\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:41 ?

Ralph Tyler remembers Cleveland, Ohio's Mt. Zion Congregational Church and Leroy Ozanne's Ozanne Construction Company. Tyler attended Miles Standish Elementary School and Charles W. Eliot Middle School before transferring to Indiana's Howe Military Academy, where he became a top student. Unhappy with the school's refusal to advance his ranking, Tyler returned home to attend Shaker Heights High School in Ohio. Even though he was no longer interested in a law career, Tyler earned his degree from Case Western Reserve University School of Law in Cleveland to avoid serving in the Vietnam War. Upon graduating, he worked at Citibank in New York City and TRW, Inc. in Ohio. When his father fell ill after a heart attack, Tyler took over his company, Ralph C. Tyler, P.E. P.S., Inc., where he worked to prove himself as an engineer. Tyler describes his business as an engineering and architecture firm in program and construction management. Tyler also shares his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Tyler, Section A2006\_047\_001\_004, TRT: 0:18:27 ?

Ralph Tyler suffered from a neurological disorder called familial tremors, but he explains that he did not let it hinder his life, and describes his future business goals, including the development of his company, Ralph C. Tyler, P.E. P.S., Inc. Tyler reflects upon his life, legacy and how he would like to be remembered. He

concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.