

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with David Holliman

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Holliman, David, 1929-2017
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with David Holliman,
Dates:	April 22, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:08:21).
Abstract:	Corporate executive David Holliman (1929 - 2017) became one of the first African Americans hired long term with Continental Airlines, where he helped to organize an African American maintenance workers organization. He later served as president of United Maintenance Incorporated and vice president of Queen City Services, Incorporated. Holliman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 22, 2006, in Denver, Colorado. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_084
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Entrepreneur David Holliman was born on September 13, 1929 in Denver, Colorado. Holliman became one of the first African Americans to gain long term employment with Continental Airlines where he helped to organize an African American maintenance workers organization. During his childhood, his father, Ernest William Holliman, was a Pullman porter and his mother, Adele Banks, died when he was two years old. His father moved the family from Pueblo, Colorado to Denver in the early 1940s where he attended Denver Public Schools receiving his diploma from East High School in 1948. That same year, he enlisted into the United States Coast Guard where he spent four years. In 1952, Holliman was discharged from active duty and spent another three years in the Army Reserves.

Holliman began his professional career as a small business owner. He owned a small janitorial business that offered cleaning services to office buildings in Denver. In 1966, he joined Continental Airlines in the maintenance department becoming one of the first African Americans to gain long term employment. There, he fought the biased policies that existed towards the African American workers and won his battle with a lawyer. Holliman later served as president of United Maintenance Incorporated and vice president of Queen City Services, Incorporated. In 1986, he retired from Continental Airlines.

Holliman has received mayoral appointments to the Denver City and County Board of Appeals and to the Mayor's Black Advisory Committee. He also served as the president of the Barrett Elementary School's Parent and Teacher Association. In 1990, he completed his studies at Regis College in Denver, Colorado where he received his B.S. degree in administration, business, and economics. Holliman has received the prestigious honor of being the Imperial Potentate of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order, Nobles of the Mystic Shrine and Jurisdiction.

Holliman resided in Denver with his wife and family.

Holliman passed away on June 30, 2017.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with David Holliman was conducted by Shawn Wilson on April 22, 2006, in Denver, Colorado, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Corporate executive David Holliman (1929 - 2017) became one of the first African Americans hired long term with Continental Airlines, where he helped to organize an African American maintenance workers organization. He later served as president of United Maintenance Incorporated and vice president of Queen City Services, Incorporated.

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:

Holliman, David, 1929-2017

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Holliman, David, 1929-2017 --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Continental Airlines

Occupations:

Civic Leader

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 David Holliman, April 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).

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 David Holliman, Section A2006_084_001_001, TRT: 0:29:03 ?

David Holliman was born September 13, 1929 in Pueblo, Colorado to Adele Banks Holliman and Ernest Holliman, Jr. His mother died when he was two years old, so he was raised by his paternal grandparents, Rhoda Holliman and Ernest Holliman, Sr. His father lived nearby in Pueblo and worked as a Pullman porter. Holliman attended Pueblo's Columbian Elementary School and helped his grandmother on their small farm. His family attended Bethlehem Baptist Church and celebrated traditional holidays. Holliman enjoyed listening to radio programs after school. When he was twelve years old, his father was promoted to porter brakeman, and Holliman moved with his father, Holliman's stepmother Dorothy Holliman, and his sister, Jo Katherine Holliman-Page, to Denver, Colorado. There, he attended Morey Junior High School. Although Holliman did not yet aspire to own his own business, he knew of several black-owned businesses in Denver's Five Point neighborhood, including a drugstore, restaurants and clubs like the Rossonian Hotel.

Video Oral History Interview with David Holliman, Section A2006_084_001_002, TRT: 0:30:18 ?

David Holliman compares his country home in Pueblo, Colorado and his life in the city of Denver. Like in Pueblo, Holliman had to sit in the balcony of movie theaters in Denver. He does not recall other explicit racial discrimination, although the communities were mostly separated along racial lines. Holliman played basketball and track at the integrated East High School, and graduated in 1948. While Negro History Week was not mentioned in school, Holliman remembers his community's celebrations. Holliman planned to attend Colorado State College of Education, but was drafted in 1948 to the U.S. Coast Guard, where he experienced little discrimination. Holliman supported the Civil Rights Movement primarily through his involvement with the Prince Hall Freemasonry organization, which he joined through his father. He met Reverend Benjamin Hooks and Rosa Parks at an NAACP event. Holliman also describes how he discovered his family history. At fifty years old, he received his degree from Denver's Regis College.

Video Oral History Interview with David Holliman, Section A2006_084_001_003, TRT: 0:28:08 ?

David Holliman's family moved to Pueblo, Colorado from Georgia, where his grandfather worked at Colorado Fuel and Iron. Upon his discharge from the U.S. Coast Guard, Holliman worked as a mail room clerk in the Denver Federal Center. He was then hired by Continental Airlines, where employees received a directive that they must be clean-shaven. Holliman and other black employees felt the order to be discriminatory and successfully had it reversed. Holliman witnessed favoritism in the airline business, though not based on race. In 1965, he retired from Continental and opened his own custodial business, United Maintenance Incorporated. Holliman was also active in the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine order of the Masons, where he moved through the thirty-three degrees to achieve the highest rank. His activity in the Masons also supported the Civil Rights Movement. Holliman invited Ralph Abernathy to speak at East High School and supported Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nonviolent philosophy.

Video Oral History Interview with David Holliman, Section A2006_084_001_004, TRT: 0:28:43 ?

David Holliman was appointed by Mayor Wellington Webb to serve on the Denver City and County Board of Appeals from 1986. During Webb's tenure, Holliman also served on the Mayor's Black Advisory Committee with councilwoman Allegra "Happy" Haynes, and on the Colorado Black Round Table. Holliman and Reverend Leon Kelly met with local gang leaders to attempt to broker a truce, and brought them to a Masonic convention in Miami.

They also partnered with a judge in Cleveland, Ohio to move gang members to his jurisdiction, giving them a chance at a new life in a new city. The Denver Police Department nominated Holliman an honorary captain in recognition of his work. When he was fifty years old, Holliman returned to college, where he shared his life experiences with his fellow students and professors. Holliman talks about his family and community in Denver. He also reflects upon his life, legacy and describes how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with David Holliman, Section A2006_084_001_005, TRT: 0:12:09 ?
David Holliman narrates his photographs.