

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Marv Dyson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Dyson, Marv, 1937-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marv Dyson,
Dates:	January 20, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:21:14).
Abstract:	Broadcast executive Marv Dyson (1937 -) was the co-owner of thirteen radio stations, and he was the director of operations of Kennedy-King College's radio station, 89.3 WKKC-FM in Chicago. He was the former president of WGCI-FM in Chicago, where he discovered Tom Joyner, hired Doug Banks and gave Steve Harvey his first break in radio broadcasting. Dyson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 20, 2007, in Burr Ridge, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_021
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Radio executive Marv Dyson was born November 28, 1937 in Chicago, Illinois to Florence Dyson and Richard Dyson, both of whom were radio announcers. In the early 1940s, Dyson attended McCosh Elementary School in the West Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago and Parker High School, graduating in 1955.

Dyson attended the College of Emporia in Emporia, Kansas, graduating in 1959. In 1968, Dyson began working for Johnson Publishing Company's legendary WJPC-FM radio station in Chicago, where he became president and general manager. In the mid-1970s, Dyson discovered radio disc jockey Tom Joyner, who was working in radio in Montgomery, Alabama, and convinced him to work for WJPC-FM, where Joyner would stay until the mid-1980s.

In 1978, Dyson left WJPC and began working for Clear Channel's WGCI-FM and WVAZ-FM as a sales account executive. He became general manager of the station in 1981, hiring Kevin Wagner, the future founder of Urban Radio Communications, out of high school to be the station's account executive. Another discovery of Dyson's was on-air personality Doug Banks, who began his radio show with WGCI-FM in 1986. He also gave comedian Steve Harvey his first break in the radio broadcasting industry.

Dyson was promoted to President of WGCI-FM in 1994 after leading the station to Chicago's highest audience ratings. In 1998, Dyson received a lifetime achievement award at the third annual March of Dimes Achievement Radio Awards. In 2003, Dyson was honored by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and the radio community as the Broadcast Advertising Club of Chicago's Person of the Year. That same year, Dyson retired as general manager of Clear Channel's urban radio station group after thirty-five years. Dyson was an early investor in Urban Radio Communications, and, in 2005, Goldman Sachs Urban Investment Fund infused \$17 million into the company, doubling the group's properties and making it the second-largest African American-owned radio company in the

country. Dyson co-owns thirteen radio stations, and he is the director of operations at Kennedy King College's radio station, 89.3 WKKC-FM.

Dyson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 20, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Marv Dyson was conducted by Sasha Dalton on January 20, 2007, in Burr Ridge, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Broadcast executive Marv Dyson (1937 -) was the co-owner of thirteen radio stations, and he was the director of operations of Kennedy-King College's radio station, 89.3 WKKC-FM in Chicago. He was the former president of WGCI-FM in Chicago, where he discovered Tom Joyner, hired Doug Banks and gave Steve Harvey his first break in radio broadcasting.

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:

Dyson, Marv, 1937-

Dalton, Sasha (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Dyson, Marv, 1937- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Clear Channel (Firm)

Occupations:

Broadcast Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Marv Dyson, January 20, 2007. 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 Marv Dyson, Section A2007_021_001_001, TRT: 0:29:01 ?

Marv Dyson was born on November 28, 1937 in Chicago, Illinois to Florence Smith Dyson and Richard Dyson, Sr. During the 1930s and 1940s, both of Dyson's parents hosted radio shows in Chicago, at a time when few African Americans worked in the broadcasting industry. His father had a program on WCFL Radio, where he courted Dyson's mother on the air. The couple married; and, soon after, Dyson's mother started her own program, 'Listen Ladies,' on WBEE Radio. Dyson grew up on the South Side of Chicago, in the Woodlawn and Englewood neighborhoods. He attended McCosh Elementary School and Parker High School, where the students were predominantly white. Outside of school, Dyson spent time with his two brothers, with whom he enjoyed visiting Washington Park, playing pool and going to the movies at the Tivoli Theater. After graduating from college, Dyson became a salesman at WAAF Radio in 1967. When John H. Johnson acquired the company, Dyson helped rebuild the station as WGRT Radio, and then moved to WGGI Radio.

Video Oral History Interview with Marv Dyson, Section A2007_021_001_002, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Marv Dyson attended Woodrow Wilson Junior College in Chicago, Illinois, and then the College of Emporia in Emporia, Kansas, where he earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education. He briefly taught at Chicago's McCosh Elementary School, before leaving to work at the post office and Chicago Transit Authority. Then, Dyson began his sales career at the Wilson Sporting Goods Company; and, in 1967, obtained a sales position at Chicago's WAAF Radio. There were few African American media salesmen at the time, and Dyson was unable to sell airtime to major advertising agencies and clients. Instead, he excelled in his position by obtaining contracts with small businesses from Chicago's South Side, and larger companies like the Inland Steel Company. During this time, he met radio personalities Herb Kent, Pervis Spann, Holmes "Daddy-O" Daylie and Lucky Cordell. In 1970, Dyson left WAAF Radio to become an account executive and station manager at WGGI Radio, where he hired Tom Joyner and Steve Harvey.

Video Oral History Interview with Marv Dyson, Section A2007_021_001_003, TRT: 0:29:22 ?

Marv Dyson was a pioneer in the African American radio broadcasting industry. From the 1960s, he worked in sales and management at a number of black radio stations in Chicago, Illinois, including WAAF Radio, WGRT Radio, WJPC Radio and WGGI Radio. During his career, Dyson faced racial discrimination from his white sales clients, many of whom refused to purchase airtime on black radio stations. Dyson was tasked with persuading such companies to advertise to the African American market, and found it especially difficult to convince automotive companies like the Chrysler Corporation that African Americans had a demand for luxury vehicles. In addition to his sales duties, Dyson worked as a station manager alongside notable radio personalities like Al Benson, Tom Joyner and Bob Wall. Dyson talks about the role of Chicago's black radio stations in the election of Mayor Harold Washington in 1983; and in raising funds to support Girl X, a child rape survivor from Chicago's Cabrini-Green Homes.

Video Oral History Interview with Marv Dyson, Section A2007_021_001_004, TRT: 0:28:02 ?

Marv Dyson worked alongside musical artists, athletes and radio personalities like Herb Kent and Bob Wall during his time as a radio station manager in Chicago, Illinois. He also helped deejays overcome drug addiction, depression and other problems by sending them to counseling. Dyson spent most of his career at Chicago's WGGI Radio; where, during his eighteen-year tenure, he grew the station's revenue from \$2 million to \$42 million. He also hired Elroy

Smith as the station's head of programming, and maintained WGCI Radio's status as one of the top black radio stations. In 2003, Dyson retired from WGCI Radio at the request of its parent company, Clear Channel Communications, Inc. He went on to establish Urban Radio Broadcasting, LLC, through which he purchased and restructured low-performing stations in small markets like Muscle Shoals, Alabama and Columbus, Mississippi. At the time of the interview, Dyson owned thirteen radio stations across the country.

Video Oral History Interview with Marv Dyson, Section A2007_021_001_005, TRT: 0:25:34 ?

Marv Dyson retired from Clear Channel Communications, Inc. in the late 1990s, but continued to work in the radio industry. He established Urban Radio Broadcasting, LLC, a media company that owned thirteen radio stations in markets across the United States. Dyson also continued to work at Kennedy-King College in Chicago, Illinois, where he developed a radio broadcasting education program, as well as the school's WKKC Radio station. He created the program in collaboration with several colleagues, including radio executives Melody Spann-Cooper and Earl Jones, and program director Elroy Smith. Dyson's son also entered the radio industry, and managed two stations through KPRS Radio in Kansas City, Missouri. Dyson reflects upon his life, his hopes for the African American community and his advice to aspiring radio professionals. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.