

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Floyd Norman

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Norman, Floyd
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Floyd Norman,
Dates:	November 5, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:22:56).
Abstract:	Animator and scriptwriter Floyd Norman (1935 -) worked for Walt Disney Studios on <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> , <i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> and <i>Mulan</i> . He also worked for Hanna-Barbera Productions as an animator on the <i>Scooby Doo</i> and <i>Smurfs</i> programs. Norman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 5, 2007, in Pasadena, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_321
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Animator and script writer Floyd Norman was born on June 22, 1935 in Santa Barbara, California. He began producing animated films while he was still in high school. Early in his career, Norman worked with Bill Woggon on the animated comic book series, *Archie*. In the 1960s, Norman attended the Art Center School in Pasadena, California, majoring in illustration. After only two years of study, Norman was hired at Walt Disney Studios. He started working as an animator on the film, *Sleeping Beauty* and was promoted to the story department. Under Walt Disney's personal supervision, Norman worked on the story sequence for scenes in the animated film, *The Jungle Book*.

Norman met fellow African American animation artist Leo Sullivan right after Sullivan graduated from college and began searching for employment. The two animators realized that they had similar interests and started working with each other on various animated films. Sullivan wrote and directed a short cartoon on the story of Christopher Columbus and later, the two produced an elaborate animated fantasy tale. Norman's and Sullivan's films helped Sullivan earn his first professional job in the animation industry. In the mid-1960s, Norman left Walt Disney Studios, and alongside Sullivan, founded Vignette Films, Inc. where they produced six animated films on the subject of black history. In the 1970s, Norman wrote and produced animated segments for *Sesame Street*, *Villa Alegre* and dozens of other educational films. In addition, Norman supervised the animation layout at Hanna-Barbera Productions and storyboarded several shows including *The Flintstones*, *The Smurfs* and *Scooby Doo*. In the 1980s, Norman returned to Disney and wrote the syndicated Mickey Mouse comic strip. Norman also worked on feature length animated films such as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Mulan* and *Toy Story 2*.

In 1999, Norman and Leo Sullivan created a multicultural internet site, www.Afrokids.com, designed to present a variety of African American images to children. At the Annie Awards in 2003, Norman won the Winsor McKay Lifetime Achievement Award.

Floyd Norman was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 5, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Floyd Norman was conducted by Jacques Lesure on November 5, 2007, in Pasadena, California, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Animator and scriptwriter Floyd Norman (1935 -) worked for Walt Disney Studios on *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Mulan*. He also worked for Hanna-Barbera Productions as an animator on the *Scooby Doo* and *Smurfs* programs.

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:

Norman, Floyd

Lesure, Jacques (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Norman, Floyd--Interviews

African American animators

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Animator

Scriptwriter

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers|EntertainmentMakers

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 Floyd Norman, November 5, 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 Floyd Norman, Section A2007_321_001_001, TRT: 0:29:08 ?

Floyd Norman was born on June 22, 1935 in Santa Barbara, California to Evelyn Davis Norman and James Norman, Sr. Norman's parents were both born in Natchez, Mississippi, and moved to California as teenagers. Norman's maternal grandparents, Emma Davis and John Davis, Sr., had a strong influence on his childhood, as they cared for him and his brothers while his parents worked. It was at his grandparents' home that Norman first learned about the work of animator Walt Disney. Norman does not recall discrimination in his racially mixed neighborhood in Santa Barbara, although African Americans were in the minority there. Norman aspired to become an artist from an early age. While he studied art in school, his art was primarily influenced by his favorite comic strips, like Dick Tracy and Li'l Abner. Additionally, Norman and his family were musically inclined. He attended the Lincoln School, Santa Barbara Junior High School and Santa Barbara High School, where he was involved with the school bands.

African American families--California--Santa Barbara.

African American grandparents.

Race relations--California--Santa Barbara.

African American children--Elementary (Secondary).

Art--Study and teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with Floyd Norman, Section A2007_321_001_002, TRT: 0:28:53 ?

Floyd Norman attended Santa Barbara High School in Santa Barbara, California, where he illustrated the school newspaper, The Forge, and played in the orchestra. Seeing his artistic talent, Norman's biology teacher introduced him to cartoonist Bill Woggon, who hired Norman as his assistant. The job initially consisted of drawing the borders, speech bubbles and backgrounds for Woggon's comics; but, as time went on, Norman was allowed to draw entire pages on his own. One week after graduating, Norman interviewed with Ken Seeling at the Walt Disney Studios. Seeling was impressed with Norman's work, but advised him to go to art school to develop his talent. Norman attended the Art Center School in Pasadena, California, where he was one of only three African American students. After two years, Norman was invited by Seeling to become an apprentice at the Walt Disney Studios. During his apprenticeship, Norman saw Walt Disney for the first time; and, at the end of the program, was hired as a full-time illustrator.

Animators--California.

African American college students--California--Pasadena.

Los Angeles (Calif.)--Race relations.

Apprenticeship programs--California.

Walt Disney Company--Employees.

Art Center College of Design (Pasadena, Calif.).

Video Oral History Interview with Floyd Norman, Section A2007_321_001_003, TRT: 0:29:18 ?

Floyd Norman first encountered Walt Disney during his apprenticeship at the Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, California. Norman admired Disney's influence on entertainment and American culture through his animations and the newly opened Disneyland in Anaheim, California. At the end of the apprentice program, Norman was hired as a full-time employee at the Walt Disney Studios, where he was the only African American illustrator. At that time, few people of color worked in any of the Hollywood film studios. After ten years' work as an illustrator, Norman was transferred to the storyboard department, which was

considered a top positions in the company, as it was where Disney focused on his own work. One of Norman's first major assignments was to storyboard the waltz scene in 'The Jungle Book' with his mentor and supervisor, Vance Gerry. In 1965, Norman partnered with African American filmmakers Leo Sullivan and Dick Allen to record the Watts riots in Los Angeles, California.

Disney, Walt, 1901-1966.

Apprenticeship programs--California.

Racism in cartoons--United States.

Riots--California--Los Angeles.

Diversity in the workplace--United States.

Disneyland (Calif.)--Planning.

Antisemitism.

Video Oral History Interview with Floyd Norman, Section A2007_321_001_004, TRT: 0:28:43 ?

Floyd Norman was drafted into the U.S. Army during the Korean War. After being discharged, he returned to the storyboard department at the Walt Disney Studios. In 1966, Walt Disney died from lung cancer, and his brother, Roy O. Disney, took over the company in order to maintain the studio and finish the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida. That year, Norman met his wife, and left Walt Disney Studios to found his own film company, Vignette Films, Inc., with filmmakers Leo Sullivan, Dick Allen and Norman Edelen. When their loan applications were rejected by several banks, Norman turned to investment banker Douglas Russell for financial support. However, Vignette Films, Inc. was unable to break into the mainstream industry, and disbanded after seven years. Norman then became an illustrator at Hanna-Barbera Productions, Inc., where he worked on 'Scooby-Doo' and 'Jonny Quest.' In 1979, he was honored by the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame; and, soon after, returned to the Walt Disney Studios as a publisher.

African American soldiers--Korea.

Disney, Walt, 1901-1966.

African Americans in the motion picture industry--California.

Banks and Banking.

Hanna-Barbera Productions.

Animation (Cinematography).

Entrepreneurs--California.

Draft--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Floyd Norman, Section A2007_321_001_005, TRT: 0:26:54 ?

Floyd Norman returned to the storyboard department at Walt Disney Studios in 1990 after being away for ten years. Animation had changed drastically during that time, and Norman had to adapt to new forms of storytelling. In the early 1990s, he was invited to work at the Pixar Animation Studios in Emeryville, California by filmmaker Joe Ranft, but turned down the offer, and continued to work at Walt Disney Studios. When Ranft asked again a few years later, Norman agreed. He remained employed by Walt Disney Studios, and was loaned to Pixar Animation Studios to work on films such as 'Toy Story 2' and 'Monsters, Inc.' Norman continued to work for both studios until 2000, when he retired. In his semi-retirement, Norman created Afrokids, an interactive website for children, with Leo Sullivan, and worked on films like 'Curious George.' His animations earned him the Winsor McCay Award and the Disney Legends award. Norman reflects upon the importance of history, his life and how he

would like to be remembered.

Disney-MGM Studios--Employees.

Animators--California.

African Americans--History--Study and teaching.

Animation (Cinematography)--Awards.

Kimball, Ward.

African American families--California.

Pixar (Firm).