

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Donald Frank St. Mary

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	St. Mary, Donald Frank, 1940-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Donald Frank St. Mary,
Dates:	October 8, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	10 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:42:42).
Abstract:	Mathematician and academic administrator Donald Frank St. Mary (1940 -) St. Mary was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 8, 2012, in Amherst, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_214
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Mathematician and academic administrator Donald Frank St. Mary was born on July 22, 1940 in Lake Charles Louisiana. He attended McNeese State College (Louisiana) as an undergraduate and completed his B.S. degree in mathematics in 1962. St. Mary went on to earn his M.A. degree in mathematics from the University of Kansas in 1964 and his Ph.D. degree from the University of Nebraska in 1968. As a graduate Ph.D. student he worked as an instructor at the University of Nebraska, and then at Iowa State University.

In 1968, St. Mary was hired by University of Massachusetts, Amherst (UMASS) as an assistant professor in the physics department. His early efforts to build the department and attract research funding to the university resulted in a promotion to associate professor in 1975 and subsequently to full professor in 1983. St. Mary also worked closely to advance the education of minority students. Between 1969 and 1974, he implemented an arithmetic skills course that helped build students' knowledge of computational analysis. During the summers between 1975 and 1981, he developed a two-week course, "What is Calculus About?" for sophomore and junior level high school students. When the university was in session he directed the Minority Engineering Program which assisted students in the academic support program with their calculus coursework. In 1992, he created and organized the Science Enrichment Program at the University of Massachusetts. The five-week residential program was designed to enrich minority high school student's' experiences with science curricula in a college environment.

In 1994, St. Mary was selected by faculty in the department of mathematics and statistics at UMASS to be its principal academic leader with executive responsibility for all aspects of the department, and after receiving approval from from Dean of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics he was appointed department head. During his career, St. Mary was awarded research grants totaling \$600,000 from the National Science Foundation and the Office of Naval Research. He was awarded institutional grants, all in some manner to support minority students, totaling \$7 million from the NSF and the National Cancer Institute. From 1968 to 2002, St. Mary served on the Board of Directors for the Committee for the Collegiate Education of Blacks and Other Minority Students, holding various offices including vice chairman and chairman.

St. Mary is internationally renowned for his research in Computational Ocean Acoustics. He has been invited to lecture in Accra, Ghana, Honolulu, Hawaii, and Dublin, Ireland. St. Mary has authored, co-authored, and edited scholarly works for distinguished publications such as *Proceedings of the American Mathematical Society*, *Journal of Computational Physics*, and *Journal of the American Acoustical Society*.

Donald Frank St. Mary was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 8, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Donald Frank St. Mary was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 8, 2012, in Amherst, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 10 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Mathematician and academic administrator Donald Frank St. Mary (1940 -)

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:

St. Mary, Donald Frank, 1940-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

St. Mary, Donald Frank, 1940- --Interviews

African American mathematicians--Interviews.

African American college administrators--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Mathematician

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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 Donald Frank St. Mary, October 8, 2012. 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 Donald Frank St. Mary, Section A2012_214_001_001, TRT: 1:29:39 ?

Donald St. Mary describes his family background and his parents' growing up. His mother, Daietta Elizabeth Perez, was born in 1908 in St. Martinville, Louisiana. She studied elementary education at Xavier University in New Orleans and became an elementary school teacher. St. Mary's father, Frank Joseph St. Mary, was born in 1908 in Lake Charles, Louisiana. After completing his education up to the seventh grade, he began working as a laborer at Farmer's Land and Canal Company, which was a rice farming company. He worked there until he retired at the age of sixty five.

African American families.

African American mothers--Louisiana.

African American fathers--Louisiana.

Xavier University of Louisiana.

Farming--Louisiana.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Frank St. Mary, Section A2012_214_001_002, TRT: 2:30:02 ?

Donald St. Mary was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana and is the youngest of three. He talks about his Creole ancestry, his paternal grandparents, and describes his parents' personalities and who he takes after. St. Mary grew up in an all-black community in the segregated south and attended Sacred Heart Elementary School. His earliest childhood memories are of the arrival of essential household conveniences, such as indoor plumbing, electricity, the telephone and a television.

Childhood--Louisiana--Lake Charles.

Creoles--Louisiana.

Segregation--Louisiana.

Education, Primary--Louisiana--Lake Charles.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Frank St. Mary, Section A2012_214_001_003, TRT: 3:30:18 ?

Donald St. Mary attended Sacred Heart High School in Lake Charles, Louisiana, where his interest in math continued to evolve. During high school, St. Mary worked at a newsstand and as a paper boy, delivering papers only in the black neighborhoods. He also played basketball and participated in the yearly academic math competitions, in which he worked determinedly in order to obtain the opportunity to compete at the State level at Southern University. While he always enjoyed math, St. Mary was not aware that he could pursue a career as a mathematician until later. St. Mary also talks about his childhood friends.

Education, Secondary--Louisiana--Lake Charles.

Mathematics.

Southern University (Baton Rouge, La.).

Childhood--Louisiana--Lake Charles.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Frank St. Mary, Section A2012_214_001_004, TRT: 4:30:47 ?

Donald St. Mary attended Sacred Heart High School in Lake Charles, Louisiana, where he met his future wife, Laverne Frlot. In addition to his involvement in

basketball and academic competitions, St. Mary was a member of the Glee Club. Outside of school, he was an active member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth Group, as well as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). After graduating from high school in 1968, St. Mary attended McNeese State College, which had been integrated two years prior. He majored in math and took courses in physics and philosophy as well. He earned his B.S. degree in 1962 and went on to attend the University of Kansas to pursue his M.A. degree. St. Mary describes his experience at McNeese State College and talks about his college influences.

Education, Secondary--Louisiana--Lake Charles.

High school athletes.

Glee clubs.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

McNeese State College.

University of Kansas.

Mathematics.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Frank St. Mary, Section A2012_214_001_005, TRT: 5:34:19 ?

Donald St. Mary graduated from McNeese State College with his B.S. degree in mathematics in 1962. He then attended the University of Kansas, where he pursued his M.A. degree in mathematics. Initially, St. Mary found the rigor of graduate school to be overwhelming but by his second year, he acclimated to the academic environment and completed his thesis work in the area of analytical mathematics. While at the University of Kansas, St. Mary developed an interest in computer-based mathematics and programmed one of the earliest computers, the IBM 650. However, due to a lack of dependable guidance from his advisor, St. Mary decided to leave Kansas and complete his doctoral studies at the University of Nebraska. Before earning his Ph.D. degree in 1968, St. Mary obtained a one-year instructorship at Iowa State University. He talks about his mentors and describes his dissertation, which focused on differential equations.

McNeese State College.

Mathematics.

University of Kansas.

Computer programming.

University of Nebraska.

Iowa State University.

Mentoring in education.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Frank St. Mary, Section A2012_214_001_006, TRT: 6:31:12 ?

Donald St. Mary earned his Ph.D. degree in mathematics from the University of Nebraska in 1968. He was then appointed as an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. While there, he wrote a paper that articulated a valid solution to a theorem, which was initially developed by Zeev Nehari. In 1975, he served as a visiting professor at the University of Oklahoma for one year. After returning to Massachusetts, St. Mary was promoted to associate professor. During the summers, he taught a two-week course entitled "What is Calculus About" to minority high school students. St. Mary talks about his research and mentoring activities, describes his daily routine, and talks about his experience at the University of Massachusetts.

University of Nebraska.
Mathematics.
Nehari, Zeev, 1915-
University of Massachusetts (Amherst campus).
University of Oklahoma.
Minorities in mathematics.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Frank St. Mary, Section A2012_214_001_007, TRT: 7:31:15 ?

Donald St. Mary joined the mathematics faculty of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in 1968. Initially, the focuses of his professional activities were on research and grant funding. However, by the mid-80s, there was an institutional shift of focus towards teaching and mentoring. Also at this time, St. Mary's mathematical research became more computational. After becoming full professor in 1983, St. Mary was hired as a consultant for the Naval Underwater Systems Center in New London, Connecticut, where he employed numerical analysis to study underwater wave propagation from submarines. In 1991, St. Mary served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Housing Allowance Project in Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1994, St. Mary was appointed chair of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Massachusetts.

University of Massachusetts (Amherst campus).
Mentoring in education.
Naval Undersea Warfare Center (U.S.).
HAP, Inc.
Mathematics.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Frank St. Mary, Section A2012_214_001_008, TRT: 8:30:53 ?

Donald St. Mary was appointed chair of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in 1994. In 1992, he was awarded a \$3 million dollar grant from the National Cancer Institute for the Science Enrichment Program, which is a summer science program for high school students from underrepresented minority and underserved populations. St. Mary has also received grant funding from the National Science Foundation for faculty and undergraduate development programs, and scholarships. In 1995, St. Mary was honored as the National Association of Mathematicians David Blackwell Lecturer. In 2002, he was appointed as Professor Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts. St. Mary talks about his teaching philosophy and his involvement in community activities.

University of Massachusetts (Amherst campus).
National Cancer Institute (U.S.).
Minorities in science.
National Science Foundation (U.S.).
Mathematics--Study and teaching (Higher).

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Frank St. Mary, Section A2012_214_001_009, TRT: 9:29:35 ?

Donald St. Mary's talks about his family, shares his hopes and concerns for the African American community, reflects upon his career and legacy, and talks about how he would like to be remembered. He also describes his photos.
African American families.

Reminiscing.

Photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Frank St. Mary, Section A2012_214_001_010, TRT:
10:04:42 ?

Donald St. Mary describes his photos.

Photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald Frank St. Mary, Section
A2012_214_ST_MARY_DONALD_06_MED_001, TRT: