

Collection #
SC 3589
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**THOMAS H. RIDLEY
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW, 2016**

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Processed by

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June 2019

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript folder; 1 audio DVD

COLLECTION DATES: 2016

PROVENANCE: Thomas H. Ridley, Indianapolis, June, 2019

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NOTES: This forms part of the “Indiana Community Builders” Oral History Program

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Thomas A. Ridley was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1922, to Thomas H. Ridley Sr. (1880–1929) and Evelyn Hazelwood (1890–1969). An African American, he grew up living near Indiana Avenue on Indianapolis’s Near West Side. In his youth, he worked with his older brother in his hauling business and delivered the *Indianapolis Star*. He later held part-time jobs with Stout’s Footwear and Marilyn Fur Studio.

Ridley attended Crispus Attucks High School but entered the U.S. Army, where he served in the 3684th Combat Truck Company, 470th Quartermaster Regiment in Europe during World War II, delaying his graduation from high school until after his return.

In 1948, Ridley married Mary Louise Holliman (1924–2010), with whom he was reacquainted at Crispus Attucks when he returned to finish his high school degree in 1946. They had two daughters—Diane Louise Ridley (1950–2004), and Katherine Ellen Ridley-Merriweather (b. 1959).

Throughout his adult life, Mr. Ridley has lived in Indianapolis, where he worked for the U.S. Postal System from 1946 to 1978. Mr. Ridley has written and produced *From the Avenue: A Memoir* (3rd rev., 2014), which provides a glimpse into his family, neighborhood acquaintances, and the culture surrounding the area known as “The Avenue” during the early- to mid-1900s. Currently, he resides in Indianapolis and works at the Madam C. J. Walker Building as a tour guide, sharing his personal knowledge of the Walker Building, “The Avenue,” and Ransom Place, a nearby neighborhood.

Sources:

Information in Collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This manuscript was transcribed from a digitally recorded interview conducted on 30 August 2016, in the Corson Room at the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center, Indianapolis, Indiana, by Wendy L. Adams, Indiana Historical Society's (IHS) director of oral history. Data Logistics Co. transcribed the interview in November 2016, and Ms. Adams lightly edited the transcript in Spring 2019. The interview, which includes the audio recording and the transcript, is housed at the William H. Smith Memorial Library, Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center, Indianapolis, Indiana.

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