Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616
info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator: Hannah, Marc
Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marc Hannah,
Dates: March 10, 2011
Bulk Dates: 2011
Physical Description: 6 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:50:04).
Abstract: Electrical engineer and computer graphics designer Marc Hannah (1956 - ) co-founded and designed hardware for Silicon Graphics, Inc., a leading company in the graphics design industry during the 1990s. Hannah was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 10, 2011, in Oakland, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification: A2011_006
Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Electrical engineer and computer graphics designer Marc Regis Hannah was born on October 13, 1956, in Chicago, Illinois to Huber and Edith Hannah. He attended the Illinois Institute of Technology, with funding from a scholarship awarded by AT&T’s Bell Laboratories. Hannah received his B.S. degree in electrical engineering in 1977 before going on to Stanford University where he obtained his M.S. degree in 1978 and his Ph.D. degree in 1985.

In 1982, Hannah co-founded Silicon Graphics, Inc. (SGI) with Jim Clark and five others, a company that went on to be well-known for its computer graphics technology. In 1986, he was named the company’s principal scientist for the creation of computer programs like Personal IRIS, Indigo, Indigo2, and Indy graphics that are used to create effects for movies like Jurassic Park, Aladdin, Beauty and the Beast, The Hunt for Red October, and Field of Dreams. George Lucas’ Industrial Light & Magic used Silicon Graphics’ technology to create Terminator 2. Hannah’s programs have also been used to create television commercials and the opening introduction for Monday Night Football. In addition, the company’s technology is used in engineering, research, and for military applications. Hannah is a partial owner of Rondeau Bay, a construction company in Oakland, California.

Since 1994, Hannah has sat on the Board of Directors for Magic Edge. He has also been profiled in Ebony magazine, Electronics magazine, Forbes, and PC Magazine. In addition, Hannah has received the Professional Achievement Award from the Illinois Institute of Technology and the National Technical Association.

Marc Hannah was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 10, 2011.

Scope and Content
This life oral history interview with Marc Hannah was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 10, 2011, in Oakland, California, and was recorded on 6 Betacam SP videocassettes. Electrical engineer and computer graphics designer Marc Hannah (1956 - ) co-founded and designed hardware for Silicon Graphics, Inc., a leading company in the graphics design industry during the 1990s.

**Restrictions**

**Restrictions on Access**

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

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**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:**

Hannah, Marc  
Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)  
Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

**Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Marc Hannah--Interviews  
African American Electrical engineers--Interviews

**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)
Marc R. Hannah lists his favorites and describes his family history. He recalls the family history of his mother, Edith Hannah, who grew up in Columbus, Ohio, and later became a school teacher after Hannah and his siblings began school. Hannah then recalls the family history of his father, Hubert Hannah, who was raised in Hilltop, West Virginia. After reflecting on his parents’
Marc R. Hannah reminisces about his youth in Chicago, Illinois, including his earliest childhood memory and the sights, sounds, and smells of growing up in the city. He remembers attending Kipling Elementary School and Fort Dearborn Elementary School, and describes the phenomenon of White Flight that occurred during that time in his own school. Hannah also considers his initial interest in computer graphics. Moving on to his high school years, Hannah describes his high school experiences, first at the University of Chicago Laboratory School and then Kenwood Academy High School, during his sophomore through senior years. Hannah closes this segment describing the appearance and function of computers during his high school years.

Computers.
Racism--Illinois--Chicago
Early childhood education

Marc R. Hannah shares his experiences moving from high school through college and on to his initial work on the Geometry Engine. Hannah begins this tape by discussing his first experiences in computer programming and electrical engineering. Hannah then describes how he motivated himself to do well in school during his studies at the Illinois Institute of Technology, and how a scholarship he received from AT&T Bell Laboratories afforded him the opportunity to work in the laboratories. He then describes the experience of transitioning to Stanford University to earn his Ph.D. degree. After briefly considering the status of computer technology at the start of the 1980s, Hannah concludes this interview talking about his initial work in computer graphics technology with James H. Clark.

Stanford University
Illinois Institute of Technology
Computer programming
Electrical engineering.

Marc R. Hannah provides further information about the ground-breaking Geometry Engine, describing both its functions in rasterization and its utility as a low-cost multi-functional piece of hardware. Moving forward, Hannah outlines the successes of Silicon Graphics, Inc. (SGI), a computer graphics technology company that he helped co-found with his adviser, James H. Clark in 1982. He delves into the question of balancing his graduate work with his
work at SGI, and explains the theories behind his dissertation. In the second part of the tape, Hannah discusses the growing use of computers in generating movie special effects through the 1980s and 1990s. He notes the success of SGI through this period of time.

Computer graphics--technology and applications
Stanford University
SGI (Firm)

Video Oral History Interview with Marc Hannah, Section A2011_006_001_005, TRT: 0:30:24 2011/03/10

Marc R. Hannah begins this interview tape discussing the scientific applications of the graphics technology produced by Silicon Graphics, Inc (SGI). Hannah then details the growth and decline of SGI during the 1990s and 2000s, and he notes his departure from the organization in 1997. Hannah continues by describing his involvement with a series of projects and organizations, including Omniverse Digital Solutions, where he served as a consultant for a web-portal focused on African American community; Pulsent Corporation, where he worked on hardware for video compression technology; and SongPro, Inc., where he worked to develop hardware for playing music on a Nintendo Game Boy. Hannah concludes this interview describing his involvement with the Strategic Urban Development Alliance (SUDA) and his plans for his future.

Scientific applications
Nintendo Co.
Internet in education.

Video Oral History Interview with Marc Hannah, Section A2011_006_001_006, TRT: 0:18:19 2011/03/10

Marc R. Hannah begins the interview describing his hopes and concerns for the African American community, citing his desire for technology to play a role in improving the education system. Hannah considers part of his legacy to be the creation of Silicon Graphics, Inc., but hopes to continue his work in engineering and technology. He describes the status of his family members, and concludes the interview by reflecting on how he would like to be remembered.

Educational technology.
Information technology--Social aspects--United States.
Digital divide--United States.