

## **Title Page & Abstract**

An Interview with Ted Curtis

Interview #: SAA-A-D-2003-002

Conducted by the Springfield African-American History Foundation  
For the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Ted Curtis, a Springfield, Illinois native, served in the Air Force. Returning to Springfield, he became a real estate agent, and later served as assistant real estate commissioner for the State of Illinois. He served on the Springfield school board for ten years and was active in local Republican politics.

Interview date(s): November 3, 2003

Interview Location: Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: audio cassette

Interviewer: Jackie Wilkes

Transcription by: The Tape Transcription Center

Edited by: Christy Barcus, Cheryl Pence

Total Pages: 33

Total Time: 1 hour, 18 minutes, 38 seconds / 1.31 hrs

Interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential  
Library in Springfield, Illinois.

## **Abstract**

### **Ted Curtis Springfield African-American History Foundation Project**

**Biographical Information and Synopsis:** Ted Curtis was born and raised in Springfield. He was one of seven children born to Roy and Dorothy (Gatewood) Curtis. Ted's grandfather came to Springfield because it was Abraham Lincoln's home and he felt it would be safe for black people. Ted attended Lincoln Grade School and Feitshans High School. He did poorly in high school, and with the knowledge that he was not going to graduate, he moved to Chicago. He repeated his junior year in Chicago, graduated, and joined the Air Force as a supply clerk, spending time in Alaska and Japan. After leaving the service, he enrolled in Wilson Junior College in Chicago, and stayed there for a year before returning to Springfield. He met his wife, Audrey Harvey, upon his return, and he began a job at Allis-Chalmers. Ted and Audrey had five children: Steve, Michelle, Theodore II, Tracy, and Tyrone. At the suggestion of a friend, Ted left Allis-Chalmers and began a career in real estate. Using the GI Bill, he attended Lincoln Land Community College and Sangamon State University. It took him sixteen years to obtain his bachelors degree. He later became assistant real estate commissioner for the state of Illinois. Ted discusses his participation in the Republican Party and his desire to be elected to public office. After extensive efforts, he was elected to the school board, where he fought for equal pay for employees. He served on the school board for ten years. Ted eventually became employed as a deputy director of purchasing for the Illinois Secretary of State and then transferred to the Department of Central Management Services (CMS) as a manager of purchasing. Ted discusses his children in detail including their struggles and their accomplishments.

**Topics Covered:** Springfield, Illinois, 1950s – present; Springfield Race Riot of 1908; Bojangles Robinson; Air Force; Alpha Phi Alpha; Allis-Chalmers; real estate; Illinois Republican Party; Abraham Lincoln; Springfield politics; Springfield School Board; his children

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