

2002

Interview no. 1643

Willie Cager

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Recommended Citation

Interview with Willie Cager by Luis A. Saenz, 2002, "Interview no. 1643," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Willie Cager

Interviewer: Luis A. Saenz

Project: 1966 NCAA Championship

Location: n/a

Date of Interview: n/a

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Transcript No.: 1643

Transcriber / Summary: Patrick Driscoll

Willie Cager played as a forward on the 1965-66 Texas Western Miners basketball team that won the 1966 NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Tournament; he describes how he had to finish up courses in New York and later in El Paso in order to attend Texas Western College; he goes over how local recruiters selected him based on his basketball ability. Mr. Cager mentions that he had to adjust to the desert but that he had no real culture shock due to the diversity of his native New York City. He recounts having to adjust to Coach Haskins due to him stressing defense where he focused more on offense; he states that he was versatile and could play guard, forward, or center; he explains that Don Haskins practice was tough, but that he was right to focus on defense. He expresses his opinion that they had a good chance to make it to the NCAA Championship due to the team's roster. Mr. Cager describes threats made against the team during the games and out on the streets; he mentions how the University of Kentucky's reputation in basketball did not faze him nor did the crowd affect him. He states Don Haskins started the best players on the team that happened to be black; he reveals that he experienced no racism or trash talk from the Kentucky players on the court. He describes that warm reception the team received when they got back to El Paso; he mentions that he did not experience any pressure to match the 1965-66 successes in the following season. He expresses that Don Haskins and the 1965-66 Texas Western team is a part of history and that the reputation is well founded based on their performance; he says their defense kept Kentucky from scoring and was the key to the team's success. Mr. Cager concludes that he is writing a book on his experiences with the team that will go into fuller detail.

Length of interview 14 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a