

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Timothy Parker

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Parker, Timothy E.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Timothy Parker,
Dates:	June 21, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:09:37).
Abstract:	Leisure chief executive and crossword puzzle designer Timothy Parker (1960 -) is the CEO of Master Puzzles, Inc. In 1996, Parker confined himself and began to develop the Universal Crossword, an interactive crossword programmed with Java, that was fun, intuitive, and easy to use. It became web's first syndicated crossword puzzle, and according to Guinness World Records, Parker is the world's most syndicated puzzle compiler of today. Parker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 21, 2001, in Catonsville, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_053
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Crossword puzzle artist, Timothy Parker was born on April 7, 1960, in Baltimore, Maryland, to a family of ten children. Spending the first part of his life in an extremely poor neighborhood, Parker and his family later moved to a nicer neighborhood as his father's business grew.

However, improvement in his family's status could not compare to the wealth of his classmates at the prestigious Gilman School, a boys preparatory school in Baltimore that he received a scholarship to attend. Parker excelled in both academics and sports, playing baseball and football. In fact, by the age of sixteen the Pittsburgh Pirates recruited him, but his parents refused to let him go. In 1978, Parker was attending the University of Maryland in College Park majoring in economics.

Following graduation, Parker worked for a local tire retailer for a number of years before taking a position with Bridgestone/Firestone in 1987, as a store manager. At Bridgestone/Firestone, Parker rose steadily through the ranks. However, he eventually hit the glass ceiling, which led him to quit his job and to pursue a dream of creating crossword puzzles.

In 1996, he sequestered himself away in his room and began to develop an interactive crossword programmed with Java that was fun, intuitive and easy to use. The Universal Crossword would become the web's first syndicated crossword puzzle. In fact, according to Guinness World Records, Parker is the world's most syndicated puzzle compiler of today. As the CEO of Master Puzzles, Inc., Parker works with Java programmers and puzzle masters to set the standard for all online puzzles. They not only make the daily Universal Crossword, but also the entertainment, sports, financial and music editions.

In his personal life, Parker is still a passionate baseball fan and an amateur writer. He is also an assistant pastor at Baltimore's Tabernacle of Deliverance Christian Center and is pursuing his M.B.A. at the University of Maryland.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Timothy Parker was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on June 21, 2001, in Catonsville, Maryland, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Leisure chief executive and crossword puzzle designer Timothy Parker (1960 -) is the CEO of Master Puzzles, Inc. In 1996, Parker confined himself and began to develop the Universal Crossword, an interactive crossword programmed with Java, that was fun, intuitive, and easy to use. It became web's first syndicated crossword puzzle, and according to Guinness World Records, Parker is the world's most syndicated puzzle compiler of today.

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:

Parker, Timothy E.

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Parker, Timothy E.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Crossword Puzzle Designer

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Timothy Parker, June 21, 2001. 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 Timothy Parker, Section A2001_053_001_001, TRT: 0:29:32 ?
Timothy E. Parker details his hardscrabble childhood of poverty which changed as his father's construction business took off. Parker's life took another great leap

forward when he was awarded a scholarship to a prestigious Baltimore boy's academy, the Gilman School. While there, Parker noticed the great disparity of social status and economics between his classmates and himself.

Video Oral History Interview with Timothy Parker, Section A2001_053_001_002, TRT: 0:30:36 ?

Timothy E. Parker describes the sea change that matriculating at the Gilman School brought in his life. Parker excelled academically as well as in sports. When approached by the Pittsburgh Pirates as a prospect, Parker's family refused to allow him to spend the summer in training camp because no one had ever lived away from home before. After graduating from the University of Maryland, Parker rose through the corporate ranks when he finally hit the glass ceiling. A moment of quiet in an airport led him to think about creating puzzles.

Video Oral History Interview with Timothy Parker, Section A2001_053_001_003, TRT: 0:29:56 ?

Timothy E. Parker describes the great epiphany of creating crossword puzzles. He encountered much flack from his former employer, but his wife was supportive. After spending three months learning computer code, Parker created the first Internet interactive crossword puzzle for the masses. He differentiates his puzzles from those of the New York Times, which he feels are deliberately difficult and meant to make people feel stupid if they can't solve the puzzles.

Video Oral History Interview with Timothy Parker, Section A2001_053_001_004, TRT: 0:28:46 ?

Timothy E. Parker describes in detail how he leaped to the forefront of the puzzle industry and has branched out into other portable games. At the time of the interview, he was in discussion with Sony/TriStar to develop a television game show. Parker also discusses how those in the industry perceive him as a successful black entrepreneur.

Video Oral History Interview with Timothy Parker, Section A2001_053_001_005, TRT: 0:10:47 ?

Timothy E. Parker provides commentary to the photographs he provided covering his childhood and his achievements in adulthood.