

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with George Wallace

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Wallace, George, 1952-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with George Wallace,
Dates:	March 7, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:40:13).
Abstract:	Comedian George Wallace (1952 -) performed for the first time in 1977, and became a regular at the famous Comedy Store, which also featured such artists as Richard Pryor and Robin Williams. He also starred in his own HBO special and appeared on many television shows, such as, "The Tonight Show," "Oprah Winfrey," and, "Late Night with David Letterman." Wallace was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 7, 2001, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_074
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born to Mary Lou and George Wallace Sr. on July 21, 1952, in Atlanta, Georgia, George Wallace grew up in a loving, religious family. He was educated at Lynwood Park Elementary and Lynwood Park High Schools. Since his early teenage years, George dreamed of becoming a comedian.

George's mother died when he was sixteen, prompting him to move to Ohio, where he found a job with Firestone Tire and Rubber. As part of the company's tuition reimbursement program, George enrolled in the University of Akron, where he studied transportation, marketing and advertising. Upon graduation, Wallace moved to New York City in pursuit of his childhood dream. At first, success in comedy proved elusive and Wallace worked as a salesman for an advertising agency to pay the bills.

Wallace's break came when one of his clients opened a comedy club. The club owner was amused by Wallace's natural humor and friendly demeanor and offered him the chance to perform stand-up. In 1977, Wallace walked on stage for the first time, wearing a preacher's robe and calling himself Reverend Dr. George Wallace. His routine was completely improvised, yet included the same imagery and delivery of the spiritual leaders that influenced him as a child. Wallace was a hit. He stayed in New York for several years perfecting his craft and living with friend and fellow comedian Jerry Seinfeld.

In 1978, Wallace moved to the West Coast, where he quickly became recognized as a talented young comedian. After one of his performances, producers from the Redd Foxx Show asked him to write for the popular series. However, after only one year of writing, Wallace returned to the stage. He became a regular at the famous Comedy Store, which also featured such artists as Richard Pryor, Rodney Dangerfield, Roseanne Barr, Jay Leno and Robin Williams. Wallace also took his comedy show on the road, opening for George Benson, Diana Ross, Donna

Summer and Smokey Robinson, among others.

Wallace, who was named the Best Male Standup Comedian during the 1995 American Comedy Awards, says that his routines are inspired by "everyday moments of life." His unique brand of social commentary proved popular with radio audiences as well. Wallace was a regular on the Tom Joyner Morning Show before joining the legendary Isaac Hayes on a popular radio program on WRKS, New York. He also starred in his own HBO special and appeared on many television shows, such as *The Tonight Show*, *Oprah Winfrey* and *Late Night with David Letterman*. His motion picture credits include *Batman Forever*, *A Rage in Harlem*, *Punchline*, *Things are Tough All Over*, and *Postcards from the Edge*.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with George Wallace was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on March 7, 2001, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Comedian George Wallace (1952 -) performed for the first time in 1977, and became a regular at the famous Comedy Store, which also featured such artists as Richard Pryor and Robin Williams. He also starred in his own HBO special and appeared on many television shows, such as, "The Tonight Show," "Oprah Winfrey," and, "Late Night with David Letterman."

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:

Wallace, George, 1952-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Wallace, George, 1952---Interviews

African American comedians--Interviews

Atlanta (Ga.)--Social life and customs

Children--Religious life--United States

University of Akron

Mothers--Death--Psychological aspects

Stand-up comedy--New York (State)--New York

Seinfeld, Jerry

Television comedy writers--Interviews

Pryor, Richard

Foxx, Redd, 1922-1991

Hayes, Isaac

American wit and humor

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Comedian

HistoryMakers® Category:

EntertainmentMakers

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 George Wallace, March 7, 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 George Wallace, Section A2001_074_001_001, TRT: 0:29:53 ?

Comedian George Wallace begins by remembering his parents and describing his childhood in Atlanta. He explains that religion was an important part of his young life, and he describes his aspirations and personality. Wallace shares some of his favorite memories from his childhood and considers his parents' influence on his life. Wallace describes the effect of his mother's death, and talks about his college years at the University of Akron.

African American comedians--Interviews.

Atlanta (Ga.)--Social life and customs.

Children--Religious life--United States.

University of Akron.

Mothers--Death--Psychological aspects.

Stand-up comedy--New York (State)--New York.

Seinfeld, Jerry.

Television comedy writers--Interviews.

Pryor, Richard.

Foxx, Redd, 1922-1991.

Hayes, Isaac.

American wit and humor.

Video Oral History Interview with George Wallace, Section A2001_074_001_002, TRT: 0:31:16 ?

Comedian George Wallace talks about adjusting to northern culture while attending the University of Akron in Ohio and explains why he studied transportation. Wallace then details the sales jobs he held in New York after graduating college and attempting to start a comedy career. He explains his breakthrough and his success on the comedy club circuit in New York. He tells of how he befriended Jerry Seinfeld and other New York comedians. Wallace also explains how he became a writer for The Redd Foxx Show.

Video Oral History Interview with George Wallace, Section A2001_074_001_003, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

Comedian George Wallace traces his career from comedy clubs in Los Angeles to the Isaac Hayes and Friends radio show in New York. He also discusses his comedic predecessors such as Richard Pryor and Redd Foxx, and explains how he learned to be a successful comedian. Wallace talks about the business side of comedy and how it has changed over the past twenty years. Finally, Wallace reflects on his career and tells some of his favorite jokes.

Video Oral History Interview with George Wallace, Section A2001_074_001_004, TRT: 0:08:59 ?

Comedian George Wallace explains how he observes humorous everyday situations and incorporates them into his jokes. He then reflects on his purpose in life, and shares his hopes for the black community.