

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Legand Burge, Jr.

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Burge, Legand, 1949-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Legand Burge, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 11, 2011
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2011
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:57:21).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Academic administrator and electrical engineer Legand Burge, Jr. (1949 - ) became the dean of the College of Engineering, Architecture, and Physical Sciences at Tuskegee University in 1999, after a thirty-year career in the United States Air Force. Burge was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 11, 2011, in Tuskegee, Alabama. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2011_016
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Engineer and academic administrator Legand Burge, Jr. was born on August 3, 1949 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. His parents, Bobbie and Legand Burge, Sr., had a profound impact on their children's lives. Burge's father, an electronics radar technician by background, served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and rose to the rank of master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force after the war, and continued to work with radar technology for the Federal Aviation Administration. Burge excelled in math and science during elementary school, and upon graduating from Oklahoma City Douglass High School in 1965, he was offered a scholarship to study at Oklahoma State University, where he earned his B.S. degree in electrical engineering in 1971. During college, Burge held internships with Oklahoma Gas and Electric. He considered establishing a career there, but through his acceptance to the Air Force Institute of Technology, he earned his M.S. degree in 1973. He was then assigned to work at the Sunnyvale Air Force Base in California with the National Reconnaissance Office. After four years of service, Burge returned to Oklahoma State University to study under Dr. Rao Yarlagadda, earning his Ph.D. degree in electrical engineering in 1979.

Burge's career has focused on information theory, coding theory, digital signal processing, and communications—areas of research that had become very popular during the 1970s and 1980s with the rise of both commercial technology and the military needs of the Cold War. Burge taught at the Air Force Academy before being selected to serve in the Intermediate Service School at the Air Command and Staff College. Shortly after, he was invited to work at the Pentagon under General Colin Powell's supervision. Burge was assigned to the research and development group of the air staff's International Program. In 1987, Burge became a lead researcher at the National Security Agency and later returned to the Pentagon, working as a cost estimator for the defense secretary. Burge retired from the military in 1999 after having served as vice commander of the entire Air Force ROTC program and the dean of the Acquisition Management School at the Defense Systems Management College. He was subsequently named a professor of electrical engineering and Dean of the College of Engineering, Architecture, and Physical Sciences at Tuskegee University.

Burge has been recognized for his administrative and research capabilities throughout his career. He was elected to the American Society of Engineering Education Executive Board in 2005. He has also worked with his son, Legand Burge, III to operate LL Burge & Associates, a consulting firm that addresses information technology needs.

Burge is the father of three adult children: Legand Burge, III, LeAnn Crisp, and Lamuelle Burge, and the step-father of Louis Burge.

Legand Burge, Jr. was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 11, 2011.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Legand Burge, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 11, 2011, in Tuskegee, Alabama, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Academic administrator and electrical engineer Legand Burge, Jr. (1949 - ) became the dean of the College of Engineering, Architecture, and Physical Sciences at Tuskegee University in 1999, after a thirty-year career in the United States Air Force.

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## 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®.

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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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Burge, Legand, 1949-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Burge, Legand, 1949- --Interviews

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African American engineers--Interviews

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African American college administrators--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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United States Air Force

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## Occupations:

Electrical Engineer

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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## 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 Legand Burge, Jr., April 11, 2011. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Legand Burge, Jr., Section A2011\_016\_001\_001, TRT: 1:31:30  
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Legand L. Burge, Jr., slates his interview and shares his favorites. He then discusses his family history. His mother, Bobbie Jean Bates, was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in 1929. Burge recalls that his ancestors on his mother's side wrote the songs, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." He also discusses his Chickasaw heritage from his maternal lineage. Bates' father, Clell Bates, is described as a man who enforced discipline in the household, so as soon as Bates graduated from Douglas High School, she left home. Burge's father, Legand L. Burge, Sr., was born in 1911 in Rome, Georgia. His family left Georgia, although they had a successful business. The family settled in Luther, Oklahoma, where Burge's paternal grandfather bought land during the 1889 land rush. Burge discusses his aunt, Los Angeles Burge Joseph, who became a prominent educator in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, during the 1950s and 1960s.

African American families--Oklahoma--Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma City (Okla.).

Spirituals (Songs)--History.

Swing low, sweet chariot.

Video Oral History Interview with Legand Burge, Jr., Section A2011\_016\_001\_002, TRT: 2:32:07  
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Legand Burge continues to discuss the background of his father and his mother. Legand Burge, Sr., served in the United States military during World War II, as a radar technician. He left the military because he was told that he would not receive any future promotions, presumably because of his skin color. Burge discusses what happened to his grandfather's land in Oklahoma. The land was split between Burge's father and aunt and uncles, but over time, Burge's brother, Kim Lamar, acquired most of the land. Burge believes his parents met while his mother, Bobbie Bates, was working as a cook at a diner named Beverly's Chicken-n-the-Ruff. Burge, Sr., and Bates married and bought a house in Oklahoma City. Legand Burge, Jr. was born in 1949. His parents soon divorced, but both were invested in their children's upbringing and education.

African American families--Oklahoma.

African Americans--Land tenure.

African American parents--Oklahoma.

Video Oral History Interview with Legand Burge, Jr., Section A2011\_016\_001\_003, TRT: 3:32:43  
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Legand Burge talks about his high school years at Frederick Douglass High School in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. His class was tracked within the network of black schools, and many of his classmates found success later in life. Douglas was strong in both the academic and fine arts programs, and he played the piano at Providence Nazarene Church, where his mother worshiped. Burge's paternal side was musically talented, and Burge considered a career as a musician,

studying some music at Oklahoma State University. A high school teacher, however, encouraged him to study electrical engineering because there was no money in music. Burge graduated from high school in 1967 and went on to earn his B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in electrical engineering from Oklahoma State University.

Education, Secondary--Oklahoma--Oklahoma City.

Music--Instruction & Study.

Oklahoma State University.

Electrical engineers.

Video Oral History Interview with Legand Burge, Jr., Section A2011\_016\_001\_004, TRT: 4:30:06  
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Legand Burge's parents divorced in 1957, but he explains that it didn't have too much of a negative effect on him. Legand Burge, Sr., remarried Clara Luper, a leader in the Civil Rights Movement in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in 1963, but they were only together for about one year. Burge lists his high school mentors. He was a good student and also a member of the student council, swim team, and band. Burge talks about some of the trends in black music and mentions his favorite musicians, the Supremes, the Temptations, and the Four Tops. Joe Edwards of the Providence Nazarene Church mentored Burge in choir management. Burge began his studies at Oklahoma State University in 1967 with varying experiences. For example, he experienced racism from an English teacher, but also received support from Dr. Rao Yarlaggada, who would later become his graduate advisor.

Divorce.

Civil rights movements--United States.

Rhythm and blues music.

Discrimination in education--Oklahoma.

Oklahoma State University.

Video Oral History Interview with Legand Burge, Jr., Section A2011\_016\_001\_005, TRT: 5:33:01  
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Legand Burge details his experience of the death of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. During college, Burge pledged the fraternity Kappa Alpha Psi through Wichita State and Kansas State Universities and became the first president of the Zeta Theta Chapter at Oklahoma State University. He earned his B.S. degree in 1971 and went on to work as a satellite officer at the Sunnyvale Air Force Station in California as part of the Air Force ROTC program. During that assignment he met George H.W. Bush, who directed the CIA at the time. The Air Force offered Burge the opportunity to return to Oklahoma State University to earn his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in electrical engineering in 1973 and 1979, respectively. While pursuing his Ph.D., his personal life suffered, and he divorced his wife Gwenetta in 1977.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

Oklahoma State University. Graduate College.

United States. Air Force.

Electrical engineers.

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity.

Education, Higher.

Video Oral History Interview with Legand Burge, Jr., Section A2011\_016\_001\_006, TRT: 6:30:26  
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Legand Burge lists some of the speakers that visited Oklahoma State University and Langston University during his college years, including Nikki Giovanni and Dick Gregory. Burge conducted his dissertation work under advisor, Dr. Rao Yarlaggadda in signal processing, and he had the opportunity to hear James Cooley and John Tukey talk about their research work in 1977. Burge's graduate thesis was entitled, "The Efficient Coding of the Prediction Residual." After earning his Ph.D. in 1979, Burge was selected to attend the Air Force Academy, where he joined the Command and Staff College in 1984. He was sent to work at the Pentagon as a cost analyst under General Colin Powell. Burge coordinated the Research and Development Organization for NATO from 1985 to 1988.

Electrical engineering.

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

United States Air Force Academy.

Pentagon (Va.).

Education, Higher.

Oklahoma State University. Graduate College.

Video Oral History Interview with Legand Burge, Jr., Section A2011\_016\_001\_007, TRT: 7:29:14  
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Legand Burge recalls his time as division chief at the National Security Agency, where he was responsible for mid-to-long-term technology. He remembers the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and NATO's response to requests by new member to join the organization. The National Security Agency also played a role in the development of integrated circuit technology, which is applied in many modern devices. Burge talks about attending the Air War College in the early 1990s and the success of some of his black classmates. He then returned to the Pentagon to serve under Secretary of Defense Les Aspin. In 1994, Burge transitioned to his position as commander of ROTC programs at Tuskegee University. Burge became the dean of the Defense Systems Management College at Fort Belvoir, Virginia in 1996 and retired from the military in 1999.

Tuskegee University--College of Engineering, Architecture, and Physical Sciences.

Businesspeople.

African American families.

Education, Higher--United States--Leadership.

Video Oral History Interview with Legand Burge, Jr., Section A2011\_016\_001\_008, TRT: 8:18:14  
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Legand Burge was offered a position at Tuskegee University as dean of the College of Engineering, Architecture, and Physical Sciences after retiring from the military in 1999. Burge nearly quit Tuskegee after his first year due to the heavy workload, but he decided to stay when one student demonstrated his appreciation of Burge. Later, he and his children began the consulting company, L.L. Burge and Associates, and in the interview, Burge goes on to share the success of his children, LeAnn, Legand, Lamuelle, and Lewis. Burge discusses things he would still like to accomplish, including sharing his documented rules for church musicians and his knowledge of how to be an effective university dean. He concludes the interview by talking about his legacy, his hopes for the future of Tuskegee University, and how he wants to be remembered.

Tuskegee University.

Education--philosophy.

Businesspeople.

African American families.

African American college administrators--Alabama.