

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Donald "Duck" Porter

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Porter, Donald, 1936-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Donald "Duck" Porter,
Dates:	May 5, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:02:30).
Abstract:	Singer Donald "Duck" Porter (1936 - 2020) is a former member of the 1950's Doo Wop group The Spaniels, who had a hit with "Goodnight, Sweetheart, Goodnight." Porter was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 5, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_097
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Donald "Duck" Porter was born in Chicago, Illinois, on November 22, 1936. The son of a teacher and a steel worker, Porter's family moved from Chicago to nearby Gary, Indiana, in 1951, where he finished high school in 1956.

The Spaniels, the musical group to which Porter would eventually belong, formed in 1952 along with Vee-Jay Records. Porter joined The Spaniels four years later, and continued to sing and tour with the group for the next three years. The Spaniels went on to become widely regarded as one of the greatest doo-wop groups of the 1950s, and their 1954 hit, "Goodnight, Sweetheart, Goodnight," was featured in several movies, including *American Graffiti* and *Three Men and a Baby*. Porter and the rest of the group toured the country with other popular acts, such as Little Richard and Chuck Berry, until the group disbanded in 1959.

Porter went to work for Acme Steel Company as a crane operator after The Spaniels broke up, where he remained until 1963; he spent the next decade working as a bookbinder. In 1973, The Spaniels re-formed and toured until 1988. After leaving the tour circuit, Porter worked as the head of security for the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston; he also traveled the country, speaking about the music of the 1950s. The Spaniels reunited again to appear as the closing act of a PBS concert special, *Doo Wop 50: Celebrating Five Decades of Street Corner Harmony*; the special generated more money than any other PBS special to date.

In addition to his professional activities, Porter raised seven children.

Porter passed away on April 29, 2020.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Donald "Duck" Porter was conducted by Adele Hodge on May 5, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Singer Donald "Duck" Porter (1936 - 2020) is a former member of the 1950's Doo Wop group The Spaniels, who had a hit with "Goodnight, Sweetheart, Goodnight."

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:

Porter, Donald, 1936-

Hodge, Adele (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Porter, Donald, 1936---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Doowop Singer

HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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 Donald "Duck" Porter, May 5, 2003. 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 Donald "Duck" Porter, Section A2003_097_001_001, TRT: 0:31:21 ?

Donald Porter discusses his family background, detailing his relationships with his father, mother, and grandmother. Porter also describes growing up in Chicago and his subsequent move to Gary, Indiana, where he graduated high school. He recalls being a nondescript student who enjoyed English classes and foreign languages.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald "Duck" Porter, Section A2003_097_001_002, TRT: 0:30:58 ?

Donald Porter recites lines from some of his favorite poetry, an interest he developed as a child with his father. Porter then describes his high school years

in Gary, Indiana, explaining how he was recruited to sing in the R&B group the Spaniels. Porter details the group's struggle with the recording industry, explaining how white groups and songwriters took credit and royalties away from black artists, including the Spaniels.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald "Duck" Porter, Section A2003_097_001_003, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Donald Porter describes the court case in which he and other members of the Spaniels sued for the right to collect royalties. He explains how the record industry exploited many black artists, and how many groups never received due credit for their achievements. Porter also talks about the Spaniels's breakup and subsequent reunion, as well as describing his life after retiring from the Spaniels.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald "Duck" Porter, Section A2003_097_001_004, TRT: 0:30:01 ?

Donald Porter discusses the differences between the current hip-hop music industry and the R&B music industry, focusing on the differences in record distribution. Porter also explains how gospel music and old spirituals formed the backbone for R&B and rock 'n roll. He considers his legacy and shares some of his own personal philosophy and faith. Porter then describes a series of photos depicting his life, family, and career.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald "Duck" Porter, Section A2003_097_Porter_Donald_06_MED_001, TRT: 1:05:55

Video Oral History Interview with Donald "Duck" Porter, Section A2003_097_Porter_Donald_06_MED_003, TRT: 0:22:03