

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Charley Pride

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com   |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Pride, Charley   |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Charley Pride,  |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | May 3, 2006  |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2006   |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:29:26).  |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Country singer Charley Pride (1938 - ) had thirty-one gold and four platinum albums, including one which reached quadruple platinum status. Pride was second in sales for RCA Records only to Elvis Presley, and was the first African American inducted into the Grand Ole Opry. Pride was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 3, 2006, in Dallas, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2006_087  |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.  |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Charley Frank Pride was the fourth of eleven children born to sharecroppers Tessie and Fowler McArthur Pride in Sledge, Mississippi on March 18, 1938. Pride's father named him Charl, but the midwife wrote Charley on his birth certificate and the name stuck. It was from the family's Philco radio that Pride learned to love country music. He picked cotton alongside his parents as a young boy and saved enough money to buy a Silverstone guitar from Sears and Roebuck. Though Pride loved to sing, it was baseball that lured him first. Pride ended his

schooling at the eleventh grade when his parents gave their permission for him to leave home to play baseball in 1953.

By 1954, Pride was signed with the Memphis Red Socks, a Negro League baseball team. He went on to play for a number of teams including the Louisville Clippers and the Birmingham Black Barons. Two years later, he was drafted and married his sweetheart, Rozene, while in the U.S. Army. They settled in Montana where Pride found steady work and also played semi-pro baseball. However, he never quite made the grade for the major leagues. After a final tryout for the New York Mets, Pride returned home to Nashville, Tennessee. He met Jack Johnson who heard his music and sent him home with the promise that he would land him a management contract. A year later, Pride returned to Nashville where he was introduced to Jack Clements, who had him record two songs that landed in the hands of RCA Records executive Chet Atkins. Pride was signed to his record label.

Pride's first single record hit the airwaves in 1966. He had his first number one hit, "All I Have To Offer You (Is Me)", on the Cash Box Country Singles Chart in 1969. Over three decades, Pride has remained one of the top twenty best-selling country artists of all-time. His incredible legacy includes: thirty-one gold and four platinum albums; one which has reached quadruple platinum (*The Best of Charley Pride*). Pride is second in sales for RCA Records only to Elvis Presley.

In 1994, Pride published his autobiography, *Pride: The Charley Pride Story*. On May 1, 1993, Pride accepted the invitation to join the Grand Ole Opry. This made him the first African American inducted into the Grand Ole Opry. In 1994, Pride received the Academy of Country Music's Pioneer Award; The Trumpet Award for Outstanding African American Achievement in 1996 and was the headliner for a special Christmas performance at the White House for former President Clinton and Mrs. Clinton.

Pride lives in Dallas with Rozene, his wife of 50 years. They have raised two sons and a daughter.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Charley Pride was conducted by Denise Gines on May 3, 2006, in Dallas, Texas, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Country singer Charley Pride (1938 - ) had thirty-one gold and four platinum albums, including one which reached quadruple platinum status. Pride was second in sales for RCA Records only to Elvis Presley, and was the first

## **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:**

Pride, Charley

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Pride, Charley--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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## **Occupations:**

Country Singer

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

MusicMakers

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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 Charley Pride, May 3, 2006. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### **Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 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 Charley Pride, Section  
A2006\_087\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:59 2006/05/03

Charley Pride was born on March 18, 1938 in Sledge, Mississippi to Tessie Stewart Pride and Mack Pride, Sr. His mother was born in Pickens, Mississippi in 1908, and grew up in Lula, Mississippi, where she was educated through the fifth grade. She had several siblings, including a twin brother who died around the age of ten years old. Pride's father was also born in Mississippi, to Ernest Pride and Dotsi Pride. Pride's parents raised eleven children together, including two children from his mother's previous marriage. His father was a stern man; and, although he was close to his Pride and his siblings when they were young, distanced himself once they reached five years old. Pride grew up on a cotton farm in Sledge, where his chores included chopping wood and caring for the livestock. His family often listened to the radio together, and enjoyed country music and talk show programs. Later in life, Pride met Vicki Vola, one of the stars of 'Mr. District Attorney,' which was his father's favorite radio show.

Video Oral History Interview with Charley Pride, Section  
A2006\_087\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:56 2006/05/03

Charley Pride grew up on a farm near Sledge, Mississippi.

He harvested cotton after school and on Saturday mornings, and played baseball with his brother following church services on Sunday. Pride became a strong pitcher; and, upon leaving school at sixteen years old, signed with the New York Yankees. After injuring his shoulder during spring training in Rio Vista, California, Pride was sent to play for a team in Boise, Idaho, and then returned to California to join the Los Angeles Angels. In 1953, he signed with the Memphis Red Sox, a Negro League team. His contract was later sold to the Birmingham Black Barons, along with that of his teammate, Jessie J. Mitchell. In 1956, Pride pitched a winning game in the Willie Mays Major League Negro-American All-Stars Tour. Soon after, he joined the country music industry, where he faced discrimination as the genre's first African American singer. During the 1970s, Pride opened for Elvis Presley in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Video Oral History Interview with Charley Pride, Section  
A2006\_087\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:55 2006/05/03

Charley Pride played baseball for the Louisville Clippers until 1956, when he joined the U.S. Army. Soon after, he married Rozene Dohan Pride, who later became his financial manager. When Pride was discharged from Colorado's Fort Carson, he was still under contract to the Memphis Red Sox, but secured a release with help from baseball commissioner Albert Benjamin Chandler. He played for the Missoula Timberjacks in Missoula, Montana; and then moved to Helena, Montana, where he was recruited to a semi-professional team by Kes Rigler, who also helped him obtain a factory position. During this time, Pride sang in Helena's nightclubs, and joined the American Federation of Musicians. After being rejected from the New York Mets, Pride auditioned for the Sun Record Company in Nashville, Tennessee with the encouragement of country singers Red Foley and Red Sovine. While in Nashville, he met producers Jack Johnson and Jack Clement, who offered him a contract with RCA Records.

Video Oral History Interview with Charley Pride, Section  
A2006\_087\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:48 2006/05/03

Charley Pride recorded seven songs during his first

meeting with RCA Records, including his first hit single, 'Just between You and Me.' As one of the first black country singers, he was often asked about racism in the industry. At this point in the interview, Pride reflects upon his experiences of discrimination, including an audience member who claimed to be a grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan at a concert in Texarkana, Arkansas. He also remembers being heckled by black soldiers while performing at an officer's club in Germany. Pride first met country singer Faron Young in the late 1960s, and became his friend and touring partner. In 1967, Pride performed for the first time at the Grand Ole Opry, a stage show in Nashville, Tennessee based upon his favorite radio program. Pride was named Entertainer of the Year and Male Vocalist of the Year at the Country Music Association Awards in 1971, and was inducted into Nashville's Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in 2000. He also won three Grammy Awards.

Video Oral History Interview with Charley Pride, Section  
A2006\_087\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:48 2006/05/03

Charley Pride was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville, Tennessee alongside singer Faron Young. During Pride's career as a musician, he invested in real estate and business ventures, including radio stations and local banking institutions. He also opened the Charley Pride Theater in Branson, Missouri; and, after it closed due to poor management, invested in a company that made grills. In addition, he owned a cattle ranch, which he intended to sell at the time of the interview. Pride talks about the music industry and his favorite musical artists. He also describes his plans for the future, and reflects upon his life and how he would like to be remembered. Pride concludes the interview by narrating his photos.