

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with John Terry

---

## 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>	Terry, John D., 1966-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John Terry,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 13, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:29:40).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Technology entrepreneur and electrical engineer John Terry (1966 - ) founded Terry Consultants, Incorporated, a company that helps businesses develop and apply new wireless technologies. He is also the owner or co-owner of seventeen issued and pending patents. Terry was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 13, 2007, in Plano, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_236
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Technology entrepreneur and electrical engineer John Terry was born on September 29, 1966 in Norfolk, Virginia. He grew up with his mother, Deborah Kathleen Terry, and his grandparents in the Liberty Park public housing project in Norfolk with his two younger siblings. Terry dreamed of becoming a professional basketball player. However, he could not stay on the school team because he had to work to help support his family. His high school guidance counselor helped him win a scholarship to Old Dominion University where he earned his B.S. degree in

electrical engineering in 1988.

After graduation, he moved to Cleveland, Ohio to work at the NASA Lewis Research Center. He was an experimental research engineer whose work focused on satellite communications. Terry connected his signal processing undergraduate research with his NASA communications research for his master's degree on array signal processing, also known as MIMO technology. While working at NASA, Terry attended graduate school and earned his M.S. degree from Cleveland State University in 1993. After NASA, Terry worked at Texas Instruments as a satellite systems engineer in 1995. Next, he attended the Georgia Institute of Technology and received his Ph.D. degree in electrical engineering and research in 1999.

Terry started working at the Nokia Corporation's Research Center in Dallas, Texas just before he finished his Ph.D. degree. He worked his way up and eventually became one of Nokia's principal scientists where he worked to improve Nokia's wireless service. In 2001, Terry founded his own company, Terry Consultants, Incorporated (TCI). The company specializes in helping businesses develop and apply new wireless technologies. Terry owns or co-owns more than seventeen issued and pending patents. In 2004, he spent a year as director of WiQuest Communications for baseband systems engineering and in 2005, he co-founded Witivity, which helps customer's use of broadband wireless technology.

Terry has published two books, *Blind Adaptive Array Techniques for Mobile Satellite Communications* (1999) and *OFDM Wireless LANs: A Theoretical and Practical Guide* (2001, with Juha Heiskala). He has received a number of awards including the 2002 Black Engineer of the Year Award for Outstanding Technical Contribution in an Industry. He has published several articles and taught classes at Southern Methodist University, the Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of Technology in Helsinki, Finland. Terry has also been very active in the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (IEEE). Terry and his wife, Barbara Terry, reside in Virginia. They have three sons, Amiel, William, and Shalamar and one granddaughter, Arianna.

John Terry was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 13, 2007.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with John Terry was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 13, 2007, in Plano, Texas, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Technology entrepreneur and electrical engineer John Terry (1966 - ) founded Terry Consultants, Incorporated, a company that helps businesses

develop and apply new wireless technologies. He is also the owner or co-owner of seventeen issued and pending patents.

---

## **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:**

Terry, John D., 1966-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Terry, John D., 1966---Interviews

---

African American Electrical Engineers--Interview.

---

African American entrepreneurs--technology--Interviews.

---

## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## **Occupations:**

Technology Entrepreneur

---

Electrical Engineer

---

## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ScienceMakers

---

## **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 John Terry, August 13, 2007. 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).

---

## 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 John Terry, Section  
A2007\_236\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:00 2007/08/13

John Terry was born on September 29, 1966 in Norfolk, Virginia to Deborah Kathleen Terry. He describes growing up with his mother and grandparents in the Liberty Park public housing project, a very close knit community. He met his father once when he was twelve years old . Instead, his grandfather was his father figure. Terry notes that church was not a big part of his life. He was a carefree child, with little interest in school or learning until his grandfather died when he was seven years old. After his grandfather passed, he had a new thirst for knowledge. He began asking questions all the time, reading books and encyclopedias, and he started to excel in school.

African American families--Virginia--Norfolk.

African American single mothers--Virginia--Norfolk.

African American grandparents--Virginia--Norfolk.

Public housing--Virginia--Norfolk.

African American fathers--Virginia--Norfolk.

Father figures--Virginia--Norfolk.

African American children--Virginia--Norfolk--Social life and customs.

Grandfather--Death.

African Americans--Education--Virginia--Norfolk.

Video Oral History Interview with John Terry, Section  
A2007\_236\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:50 2007/08/13

John Terry discusses his early educational experiences, his jobs, and his neighbors. Terry played sports and read comic books with his neighborhood friends. Occasionally, he fell behind on his school work and he was able to catch up. He thrived on competition and feels he benefited greatly from Norfolk's racially integrated schools. Terry did very well in school receiving good grades and winning awards. John Woodis, a neighbor, ran a candy shop out of his house and employed Terry when he lost his paper route during junior high. Woodis served as a father figure to Terry after his grandfather died. During high school, Terry played basketball on the school team but was left out of plays because he was from a different neighborhood than the other players. This upset Terry but it helped him learn how to have confidence in his abilities and to not let other people define him.

African American children--Social life and customs--Virginia--Norfolk.

African American children--Education--Virginia--Norfolk.

Father figures--Virginia--Norfolk.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Virginia--Norfolk.

African American high school students--Virginia--Norfolk.

High school athletes--Virginia--Norfolk.

Video Oral History Interview with John Terry, Section  
A2007\_236\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:40 2007/08/13

John Terry talks about his high school and college

experiences. Terry struggled with the politics of his high school basketball team. He had some awkward times as a teenager, having ill-fitting clothing and being one of the only blacks in his advanced placement classes. His high school guidance counselor helped him get into college and win a scholarship to Old Dominion University. His younger brother, Melvin, felt a lot of pressure from the family to achieve at the same level as Terry. At Old Dominion University, Terry worked hard to achieve his goals. Hard work resulted in a job offer from NASA during his junior year of college. After graduation, Terry moved to Cleveland, Ohio to work at the NASA Lewis Research Center. In Cleveland, he experienced slightly different racial tensions and segregation to that of Norfolk, Virginia.

African American high school students--Virginia--Norfolk.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Virginia--Norfolk.

High school athletes--Virginia--Norfolk.

Teenage boys--Virginia--Norfolk.

Advanced placement programs (Education).

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Virginia.

Old Dominion University.

African American families--Virginia--Norfolk.

Brothers and sisters.

United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Lewis Research Center.

Race relations--Ohio--Cleveland.

Segregation--Ohio--Cleveland.

Video Oral History Interview with John Terry, Section  
A2007\_236\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:00 2007/08/13

John Terry describes his research about signal processing and satellite communications. He combined his earlier research areas to create his graduate research on array signal processing, also known as MIMO technology, for his M.S. degree. After NASA, Terry worked at Texas

Instruments which became Raytheon TI Systems. He then worked at the Nokia Corporation's Research Center in Dallas, Texas in January of 1999, just before receiving his Ph.D. degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology in May of 1999. He worked his way up and eventually became one of Nokia's principal scientists. He left Nokia to work at WiQuest Communications. Unfortunately, WiQuest tried to blame Terry for a costly mistake that was not his fault and he left the company to create his own wireless consulting firm, Terry Consulting.

Signal processing--Digital techniques.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--United States.

Science--Study and teaching (Elementary).

United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Texas Instruments Incorporated.

Georgia Institute of Technology.

Wireless communication systems.

Video Oral History Interview with John Terry, Section  
A2007\_236\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:10 2007/08/13

John Terry talks about his consulting business and not wanting to fund it with venture capitalist funding. Some of Terry's role models include Fifty Cent, Queen Latifah, Will Smith, Bill Cosby, and Tyler Perry. He is concerned that the younger generations have a feeling of entitlement and do not value of hard work. Terry hopes his contributions to wireless technology will be his legacy. He would like to be remembered as someone who committed his heart and his soul to doing the right thing and helping people along the way.

African American business enterprises.

Latifah, Queen.

Smith, Will, 1968-.

Cosby, Bill, 1937-.

Perry, Tyler.

African American youth--United States.

Wireless communication systems--United States.

Role models--United States.



