

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gene Barge

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Barge, Gene
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gene Barge,
Dates:	January 20, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:51:59).
Abstract:	Saxophonist, songwriter, and music producer Gene Barge (1926 -) played on Chuck Willis' pop hit, "C.C. Rider," co-wrote with Gary U.S. Bonds "Quarter to Three" and received a Grammy Award for co-producing Natalie Cole's "Sophisticated Lady." Barge was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 20, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_043
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Saxophonist, music producer and song writer Gene "Daddy G" Barge was born in Norfolk, Virginia on August, 9 1926. He graduated from Booker T. Washington High School and played clarinet in the school band. Barge then attended West Virginia State College where he first majored in architecture, but quickly switched to music because of his interest in the saxophone. After receiving his B.A. degree from West Virginia State College in 1950, Barge returned to Norfolk, Virginia and played with a number of bands and singing groups including the Griffin Brothers and the Five Keys.

In 1955, Barge recorded his first saxophone instrumentals entitled “Country” and “Way Down Home” on Chess Records’ Checker Label. He taught music at Suffolk High School while playing and singing in bands and touring with both Ray Charles and the Philadelphia vocal group The Turbans. In 1957, Barge played the saxophone on Chuck Willis’ “C.C. Rider,” which became a number one R& B hit. In 1960, he recorded “A Night with Daddy G” with his band the Church Street Five on Norfolk’s Legrand Label. From 1961 to 1962, Barge collaborated with Gary U.S. Bonds on a number of hit records including "School Is In," "School Is Out," "Dear Lady Twist," "Twist Twist Senora," "Copy Cat" and the number one pop hit, “Quarter to Three.” In 1964, Barge was hired as a producer, arranger, and saxophone player for Chess Records in Chicago, Illinois and played on Fontella Bass’ “Rescue Me” in 1965. Chess Records closed in 1971 and Barge was hired by Stax Records in their gospel division, Gospel Truth. Barge produced Inez Andrews’ “Lord Don’t Move the Mountain” and The Beautiful Zion Baptist Church's "I'll Make It Alright.” In 1974, Barge began working with pianist, Marvin Yancy and Charles Jackson. He was hired to do demos with Natalie Cole. He went to win a Grammy Award for co-producing Cole’s “Sophisticated Lady” in 1977.

Barge has toured with Fat Dominos, Bo Diddley, Chuck Willis, The Rolling Stones and Natalie Cole. He has had roles in many major motion pictures including *Code of Silence*, *Above the Law*, *Under Siege*, *The Package* and *The Fugitive*. Barge consulted for Martin Scorsese’s 2003 PBS documentary, *The Blues*. He also appeared in a 2010 episode of the TV documentary series *Legends*, entitled "Roll over Beethoven - The Chess Records Saga." Barge lives in Chicago, Illinois.

Gene Barge was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 20, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gene Barge was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 20, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Saxophonist, songwriter, and music producer Gene Barge (1926 -) played on Chuck Willis’ pop hit, “C.C. Rider,” co-wrote with Gary U.S. Bonds “Quarter to Three” and received a Grammy Award for co-producing Natalie Cole’s “Sophisticated Lady.”

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:

Barge, Gene

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Barge, Gene --Interviews

African American jazz musicians--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Saxophonist

Songwriter

Music Producer

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 Gene Barge, January 20, 2012. 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 Gene Barge, Section
A2012_043_001_001, TRT: 1:29:46 2012/01/20

Gene Barge was born on August 9, 1926 in Norfolk, Virginia to Esther Edward Barge and James Barge, Sr. His paternal family came to Norfolk from Fayetteville, North Carolina in search of better employment opportunities. His father worked as a welder at the Norfolk Navy Shipyard in Portsmouth, Virginia, and later became a self-taught automobile mechanic. Barge's parents separated when he was six years old; and, from that time, he was raised primarily by his paternal grandmother, Georgia Rhodes Barge. In Norfolk, Barge attend J.C. Price Elementary School and Booker T. Washington High School, where he participated in band competitions with other high schools in Virginia's Tidewater region. At this point in the interview, Barge talks about the black community in Tidewater, a region around the Hampton Roads harbor that included southern Virginia and northern North Carolina. The area produced a number of black intellectuals, like psychologist Carolyn R. Payton and theologian Samuel DeWitt Proctor.

African American families--Virginia--Norfolk.

African American jazz musicians.

Race relations--United States

Video Oral History Interview with Gene Barge, Section
A2012_043_001_002, TRT: 2:30:21 2012/01/20

Gene Barge grew up the Lindenwood section of Norfolk, Virginia. The neighborhood was located next to Huntersville, where many of the prominent members of the black community lived. His father, James Barge, Sr., was acquainted with many of the local musicians, and Barge met Fats Waller at Norfolk's Plaza Hotel, which served black entertainers during segregation. Barge played the clarinet in the junior high school division at Booker T. Washington High School. After meeting a neighbor who was building a plane in his garage, he began studying airplanes, and learned aeronautical mathematics from a high school teacher. He joined the 99th Pursuit Squadron at seventeen years old, but was never assigned to flight duty during World War II. Instead, he attended radio school, and learned to code messages. Barge was discharged from the U.S. military in 1946. After he returned to Norfolk, his father gave him his first saxophone, which was recovered from a torpedoed British Navy vessel.

African American musicians--Virginia.

World War, 1939-1945--Participation, African American.
Segregation--Virginia.

Video Oral History Interview with Gene Barge, Section
A2012_043_001_003, TRT: 3:31:17 2012/01/20

Gene Barge played the saxophone in the band during his senior year at Booker T. Washington High School in Norfolk, Virginia. After graduating, he studied music education at West Virginia State College. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt spoke at his college graduation. Barge then worked as a nightclub musician until becoming a civilian electronic mechanic for the U.S. Navy. He recorded an instrumental saxophone piece called 'Country' in 1955, and sent it as a demo to Chess Records in Chicago, Illinois. The company then signed a contract for the single "Way Down Home." Barge also served as a

substitute studio saxophonist for the Griffin Brothers. Another of his demo tracks, "C.C. Rider," was picked up by New York City's Atlantic Records, and became a hit song for singer Chuck Willis. After Chess Records executives refused to renew Barge's contract, he signed a contract with Frank Guida at Legrand Records in Norfolk. There, he met Gary U.S. Bonds, with whom he recorded 'A Night with Daddy G' and 'Quarter to Three.'

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

Sound recording industry--United States.

African American soldiers--World War, 1939-1945.

Video Oral History Interview with Gene Barge, Section
A2012_043_001_004, TRT: 4:29:38 2012/01/20

Gene Barge taught briefly in Suffolk, Virginia before signing a contract with Chess Records in Chicago, Illinois. There, he recorded as a saxophonist, and also produced and arranged music for such artists as Etta James, Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf. Barge produced Muddy Waters' 'Electric Mud' album, which was the guitarist's first recording with an electric guitar. This experience influenced Barge's work on Howlin' Wolf's 'The Howlin' Wolf Album,' which also featured an electric guitar. During his time at Chess Records, Barge toured with singer Etta James and produced several of her records. At this point in the interview, he talks about the movie 'Cadillac Records,' which was based on the story of James' career at Chess Records. Neither he nor James were consulted by the creators of the film, which included a number of inaccuracies. Barge also talks about his experiences at the white-owned Legrand Records, where he and Gary U.S. Bonds were often underpaid because of their race.

African American families--Virginia--Norfolk.

African Americans in sound recording industry.

Chess Records (Firm).

Sound recording industry--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Gene Barge, Section
A2012_043_001_005, TRT: 5:29:44 2012/01/20

Gene Barge worked with Charles Stepney to produce and

arrange 'Electric Mud,' which was Muddy Waters' first album in the rock music genre. The release was followed by Howlin' Wolf's 'The Howlin' Wolf Album,' which also adapted to the rock sound. As Muddy Waters' popularity grew, Barge recommended him to advertising agent Chuck Stepner, who was looking for an artist to record a jingle for Theodore Hamm's Brewing Company. Although the jingle became highly popular, Stepner was fired for using a black musician in the advertisement. In addition to his work with Chess Records, Barge recorded and produced doo wop and gospel music on Stax Records. He recorded the demo tapes for singer Natalie Cole with Marvin Yancy and Chuck Jackson, and later helped produce Cole's 'Sophisticated Lady,' for which he won a Grammy Award. Barge appeared in several films from 1978 to 2006, including 'Stony Island,' 'The Fugitive' and 'The Guardian.' In 1983, he toured as The Rolling Stones' saxophonist.

Chess Records (Firm).

James, Etta, 1938-.

Sound recording industry--United States.

African American entertainers.

Video Oral History Interview with Gene Barge, Section
A2012_043_001_006, TRT: 6:21:13 2012/01/20

Gene Barge starred in an episode of 'The Blues,' a documentary television program produced by Martin Scorsese. His episode focused on the recording of Muddy Waters' 'Electric Mud' album at Chess Records, and included interviews with many of the original artists. Barge also appeared in the documentary 'Roll over Beethoven: The Chess Records Saga.' At this point in the interview, Barge talks about his saxophone style, which was emulated by saxophonists like Clarence Clemons. He was influenced by gospel music and the work of Lester Young, who played with the Count Basie Orchestra. Barge also played in the Breadbasket Band, which was part of Operation Breadbasket. Barge worked to increase recognition of musicians by including credits in the liner notes of Chess Records' and Natalie Cole's albums. He was also credited on Cannonball Adderley's 'Walk Tall'

album, although he did not play on it. Barge shares his advice to young musicians, and reflects upon his life, legacy and how he would like to be remembered.

Music trade--Management.

Chess Records (Firm).

African Americans in sound recording industry.