

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Odest Jenkins

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jenkins, Odest C., 1942-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Odest Jenkins,
Dates:	November 8, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:16:31).
Abstract:	Robotics engineer and computer scientist Odest Jenkins (1974 -) is a pioneering robotics engineer whose research with the Robotics, Learning and Autonomy Group at Brown University led to the PR2 Remote Laboratory. Jenkins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 8, 2012, in San Francisco, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_213
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Computer scientist Odest Chadwicke Jenkins was born on xx/xx/1975 in [city], [state]. Jenks attended Alma College, where he graduated with his B.S. degrees in computer science and mathematics in 1996. He enrolled in graduate school at Georgia Technical Institute and received his M.S. degree in computer science in 1998. There he was a graduate research assistant and a graduate teaching assistant. Jenkins went on to attend the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, where earned his Ph.D. degree in computer science in 2003.

Upon graduating, Jenkins was awarded a postdoctoral research award in the Computer Science Department at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. In 2004, Jenkins joined the faculty in the Department of Computer Science at Brown University as an assistant professor. He was promoted to associate professor in 2010. Jenkins is the leader of Robotics, Learning and Autonomy Group at Brown University. The group explores topics related to human-robot interactions and robot learning with a specific focus on robot learning from human demonstration and robot software systems. Jenkins works with Brown University faculty and graduate students to develop methods for autonomous robot control and perception. In 2011, Jenkins worked to develop the “PR2 Remote Lab,” a remote-controlled computer laboratory designed to promote collaborative research and documentation.

Jenkins’ research has been published in numerous scholarly and professional journals, including *Human-Robot Interaction*, *Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition*. In 2010, Jenkins published *Creating Games: Mechanics, Content, and Technology*. He has also served on the editorial board for *International Journal of Robotics Research*, and the *International Journal of Humanoid Robotics*.

Jenkins is a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers for his work in physics-based human tracking from video. In 2009, Jenkins was the recipient of the Sloan Research Fellowship, and, was as selected as the National Academy of Science’s Kavi Fellow. He has received research funding from the Office of Naval Research and the National Science Foundation. In 2010, *Popular Science Magazine* named Jenkins one of their “Brilliant 10.” Jenkins lives in Providence Massachusetts.

Odest Chadwicke Jenkins was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 8, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Odest Jenkins was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 8, 2012, in San Francisco, California, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Robotics engineer and computer scientist Odest Jenkins (1974 -) is a pioneering robotics engineer whose research with the Robotics, Learning and Autonomy Group at Brown University led to the PR2 Remote Laboratory.

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:

Jenkins, Odest C., 1942-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Brown University

Brown University

Occupations:

Robotics engineer

Computer Scientist

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers|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 Odest Jenkins, November 8, 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 Odest Jenkins, Section
A2012_213_001_001, TRT: 1:30:49 2012/11/08

Odest Jenkins talks about his family background. Both of Jenkins' parents grew up in the segregated south. His mother, Nadine Francis Jenkins, was born in November of 1945 in Port Arthur Texas. She received her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in education from North Texas State University and pursued a career in higher-education administration. Jenkins' father, Odest Charles Jenkins, was born in October of 1942 in Beaumont, Texas. He earned his M.A. degree in sociology and worked for the Federal Bureau of Prisons. He has two siblings, Oren Cedric and Nadalynn Fern. Due to his parents' careers, Jenkins' family moved frequently throughout his childhood. Despite the constant change in location, sports and, especially video games, remained a consistent and inspirational part of his childhood.

African American families--Southern States.

African American parents--Education--Texas.

African American parents--Employment--Texas.

Moving, Household--Psychological aspects.

Video games and children--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Odest Jenkins, Section
A2012_213_001_002, TRT: 2:29:22 2012/11/08

Odest Jenkins was captivated by video games during his childhood due to their interactivity. As a result of his family's frequent moving around, video games provided him with a sense of constancy that he lacked from his environment and social atmosphere. Jenkins was inspired to pursue a career in science and technology after playing Atari and using the BASIC programming application to create his own video games. Jenkins describes his experiences attending school and living around the country. Jenkins began school in Anniston, Alabama at The Donoho School, an integrated private school, through the third grade. In 1983, after his family's move to Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, he attended Kelly Elementary for one year. In 1984, Jenkins moved to Wheaton, Illinois, where he attended Lowell Elementary School and Edison Middle School.

Atari 2600 (Video game console).

BASIC (Computer program language)--Software.

Video games and children--United States.

Children--United States--Social life and customs.

Transfer students--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Odest Jenkins, Section
A2012_213_001_003, TRT: 3:31:00 2012/11/08

Odest Jenkins took computer classes at the College of Dupage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, where he learned computer programming and how to type. Jenkins talks about his passion for computer programming and video games, which took precedence over his performance in school. In 1986, Jenkins received his first Nintendo gaming console, which propelled his interest in gaming and technology. Jenkins also describes his interest in the Boy Scouts and basketball. In 1988, Jenkins moved to Alexandria, Louisiana, where he began high school at Alexandria Senior High School. His family later moved to Voorhees, New Jersey, where he attended Eastern Regional High

School for his senior year. He discusses the effects that frequent moving had on his social life, as well as his post-high school aspirations.

Computer programming--Study and teaching (Higher)--Illinois.

Video games--Social aspects.

Nintendo video games--Equipment and supplies.

Moving, Household--Social aspects--United States.

African American high school students--Attitudes.

Video Oral History Interview with Odest Jenkins, Section
A2012_213_001_004, TRT: 4:29:37 2012/11/08

Odest Jenkins talks about graduating from Eastern Regional High School in Voorhees, New Jersey in 1992. Jenkins began his undergraduate studies at Alma College, which he chose because of its small size and emphasis on teaching. Although Jenkins did not perform that well in high school, he found the less regimented structure of college to be a more comfortable and engaging learning environment, where he excelled in his computer science and math courses. Jenkins worked as a resident assistant for three years and spent his summers as a research intern at the PRISM Lab at the University of Texas, Arlington and Ford Systems Integration Center in Allen Park, Michigan. Jenkins received his B.S. degrees in computer science and mathematics in 1996.

Alma College.

African American college students--Michigan.

Interns (Computer science)--United States.

Computer science--Study and teaching--Michigan.

Mathematics--Study and teaching--Michigan.

Video Oral History Interview with Odest Jenkins, Section
A2012_213_001_005, TRT: 5:29:30 2012/11/08

Odest Jenkins developed his interest in 3D computer graphics during his graduate studies at the Georgia Institute of Technology, starting in 1996. He was later introduced to the field of robotics by one of his professors, Jessica Hodgins, who was conducting research in the area of physics based animation. After receiving his M.S.

degree in computer science in 1998, Jenkins attended the University of Southern California, where he pursued his Ph.D. degree in computer science under the advisement of Maja Matarić. Jenkins worked in USC's Interaction Lab, where the focus of his research was to derive behavior modules from human motion data for controlling humanoid robots. Jenkins talks about the developments in the areas of 3D computer graphics, visual effects, and the robotics industry.

Computer graphics.

Computer scientists--United States--Intellectual life--20th century.

Robotics--Vocational guidance.

USC Viterbi School of Engineering. Computer Science Department.

Video Oral History Interview with Odest Jenkins, Section A2012_213_001_006, TRT: 6:30:34 2012/11/08

Odest Jenkins received his Ph.D. degree in computer graphics from the University of Southern California in 2003. His dissertation research focused on data-driven learning of motion permanence in robots. Jenkins describes the process of motion capture and discusses how his research seeks to address the issues with transference physical plausibility. In 2004, Jenkins was appointed as an assistant professor in the computer science department at Brown University. Jenkins founded the Robotics, Learning and Autonomy at Brown (RLAB) Laboratory while teaching a course on the methods and algorithms for autonomous control of robots, called "Building Intelligent Robots." While at Brown, Jenkins also raised grant funding for his research in human-robot interaction. He has received prestigious awards for his research.

Computer graphics--Study and teaching (Higher)--United States.

Brown University. Department of Computer Science--Faculty.

Robotics--Study and teaching--United States.

Human-robot interaction--Finance.

Science--Awards--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Odest Jenkins, Section
A2012_213_001_007, TRT: 7:15:39 2012/11/08

Odest Jenkins talks about Willow Garage, a robotics research lab and technology incubator. He also discusses the importance of improving the quality of education and the need for more people to enter the STEM fields. He reflects on his career, life, and shares his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Robotics--Congresses.

Science--Vocational guidance.

Science--Study and teaching (Higher)--United States.

Education--Aims and objectives--Evaluation.

Robotics--Economic aspects.