

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Vance Vaucresson

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## 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>	Vaucresson, Vance, 1968-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Vance Vaucresson,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 10, 2010
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2010
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:41:04).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Entrepreneur Vance Vaucresson (1968 - ) served as president of the New Orleans-based Vaucresson Sausage Company, the longest standing vendor at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival in New Orleans, Louisiana. Vaucresson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 10, 2010, in New Orleans, Louisiana. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2010_056
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Entrepreneur Vance Vaucresson was born on December 3, 1968, in New Orleans, Louisiana, to a long family history of butchers. His great-grandfather, Levinsky Vaucresson, and great-grandmother, Odile Gaillard, originated from the Alsace region of France, but they migrated to New Orleans, where Levinsky worked as a butcher around the turn of the century. Their son, Robert Levinsky Vaucresson, continued in the same line, and Vaucresson's father, Robert "Sonny" Vaucresson, transformed the family meat market into the Vaucresson Sausage Company. In 1969, the Vaucresson family started selling their sausages at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. At the 1976 Festival, New York Times Food Critic Mimi Sheraton named Sonny's hot sausage po'boy the "Best Food at the Fest."

When he was eight years old, Vaucresson's father, Sonny, began to teach him about the family business; Vaucresson learned sausage-making techniques, along with the traditions of New Orleans Creole culture. In 1983, the Vaucresson Sausage Company was officially established. They opened their factory in October on the corner of St. Bernard and North Roman, in the 7th Ward, where they made sausages and gumbo. That same year, The Vaucresson family sold sausage po'boys at the first French Quarter Festival. In 1992, Vaucresson graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, and returned to New Orleans to work at the family business. For six years he worked alongside his father, but on November 1, 1998, Sonny passed away from a massive heart attack. Vaucresson took over the family business.

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. After the disaster, Vaucresson's sausage plant laid under six feet of water; his equipment was ruined, his supply of meat spoiled, and his insurance didn't cover flood damage. Vaucresson, his pregnant wife, and his young son traveled to New Iberia, Louisiana, where they shared a three bedroom house with fifteen people while waiting for better housing. Eventually, they moved into a mobile home. Vaucresson's plant was unworkable, so he asked a man with a functioning plant in Metairie, Louisiana, for help. The man, once his main competitor, agreed, and Vaucresson was able to make his sausage po' boys for that

spring's Jazz Fest. Vaucresson continues to run the Vaucresson Sausage Company, serving his signature po'boy at both the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and the French Quarter Festival.

Vance Vaucresson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 10, 2010.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Vance Vaucresson was conducted by Denise Gines on June 10, 2010, in New Orleans, Louisiana, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Entrepreneur Vance Vaucresson (1968 - ) served as president of the New Orleans-based Vaucresson Sausage Company, the longest standing vendor at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival in New Orleans, Louisiana.

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## 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:

Vaucresson, Vance, 1968-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Vaucresson, Vance, 1968- --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:

Entrepreneur

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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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 Vance Vaucresson, June 10, 2010. 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).

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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 Vance Vaucresson, Section A2010\_056\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:05  
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Vance Vaucresson was born on December 3, 1968 in New Orleans, Louisiana to

Geraldine Dave Vaucresson and Robert “Sonny” Vaucresson. His paternal great-grandparents moved from the Alsace-Lorraine region of France to New Orleans, where his grandfather, Robert Levinsky Vaucresson, opened a meat market with funding from the Work Projects Administration. Vaucresson’s father was born in New Orleans in 1931, and served in the Korean War before graduating from Xavier University of Louisiana. An entrepreneur, he befriended Preservation Hall founders Larry Borenstein and Allan Jaffe, who helped him open Vaucresson’s Café Creole on Bourbon Street in the French Quarter.

Vaucresson’s mother was born in New Orleans in 1933. Her father, John Dave, Sr., played the banjo in Sam Morgan’s Jazz Band; and, after her mother died, she was raised by her paternal aunt, Anita Dave Auzeene. She graduated from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and then became the first black librarian at the New Orleans Public Library.

Video Oral History Interview with Vance Vaucresson, Section A2010\_056\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:19  
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Vance Vaucresson’s paternal grandfather, Robert Levinsky Vaucresson, worked as a butcher in New Orleans, Louisiana. He began his career as a vendor at the St. Bernard Market, and later purchased a building in the 7th Ward. After his death, Vaucresson’s father, Robert “Sonny” Vaucresson, maintained the meat market, and also invested in a number of other businesses, including a liquor store and a cigarette vending machine company. Vaucresson’s father went on to open Vaucresson’s Café Creole on Bourbon Street in the French Quarter, where he attracted a diverse clientele, including artist Noel Rockmore. At this point in the interview, Vaucresson talks about the restaurant’s menu, which was based on recipes from ‘The Picayune Creole Cook Book.’ He explains the difference between Creole and Cajun cuisine, and talks about the Creole cultural identity and New Orleans’ Creole neighborhoods. Vaucresson also describes his family’s charcuterie products, including hogshead cheese and chaurice sausage.

Video Oral History Interview with Vance Vaucresson, Section A2010\_056\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:06  
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Vance Vaucresson’s father, Robert “Sonny” Vaucresson, opened Vaucresson’s Café Creole on Bourbon Street in New Orleans, Louisiana during the mid-1960s. He also founded Sons Vending, Inc., and helped lead the Creole Fiesta Association, which organized an annual parade in celebration of the city’s Creole culture. Through his friendship with Larry Borenstein and Allan Jaffe, the founders of New Orleans’ Preservation Hall, Vaucresson’s father secured George Wein’s invitation to sell charcuterie products at the inaugural New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, which took place in the Tremé neighborhood’s Congo Square. At the time of the interview, the Vaucresson Sausage Company was the festival’s most longstanding vendor. Vaucresson talks about his parents, including his father’s legacy and friendship with Ernest Morial, who became New Orleans’ first black mayor; and his mother, Geraldine Dave Vaucresson, who survived cancer three times. He also reflects upon the diversity within New Orleans’ Creole community.

Video Oral History Interview with Vance Vaucresson, Section A2010\_056\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:16  
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Vance Vaucresson grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana, where his family owned a home in the Vista Park section of Gentilly. He began his education at the St. Frances Xavier Cabrini School, a predominantly white Catholic school in New Orleans, where Vaucresson sang in the choir and played sports. His parents were involved in the Catholic charismatic movement, which incorporated worship practices like praying in tongues and being anointed with oil. At this point in the

interview, Vaucresson describes his experiences of being “slain in the Holy Spirit.” He also remembers the influence of his older brothers, Robert Vaucresson, Jr. and Rene Vaucresson, who were talented singers and sportsmen. Vaucresson went on to attend New Orleans’ Brother Martin High School, where he played basketball and football, and sang in the chorus. Under the influence of his teachers, he considered joining the Brothers of the Sacred Heart; but, upon graduating, matriculated at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Vance Vaucresson, Section A2010\_056\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:25  
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Vance Vaucresson matriculated in 1988 at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He joined the glee club; studied philosophy under Aaron L. Parker; and, during his senior year, protested against a Ku Klux Klan rally in downtown Atlanta. In 1992, Vaucresson graduated with a business degree, and returned to his hometown of New Orleans, Louisiana, where he helped his father, Robert “Sonny” Vaucresson, develop the Vaucresson Sausage Company into a meat industry leader. He secured contracts with distributors like the Schwegmann Brothers Giant Supermarket and Winn Dixie Stores, Inc., and assumed the company presidency after his father’s death in 1998. However, in 2005, the Vaucresson Sausage Company’s processing facility was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, and the insurance policies were insufficient to repair the damages. From that time, Vaucresson struggled to rebuild the business, and experienced a number of family tragedies, including his wife’s ill health and the deaths of several relatives by suicide.

Video Oral History Interview with Vance Vaucresson, Section A2010\_056\_001\_006, TRT: 0:07:23  
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Vance Vaucresson was the president of the Vaucresson Sausage Company in New Orleans, Louisiana. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which destroyed the company’s processing plant, Vaucresson was forced to seek outside support. One of his competitors, Jerry Hanford of the Crescent City Meat Company in Metairie, Louisiana, granted him use of his facility; and, as a result, Vaucresson was able to remain in the meat business, and continued to participate in the annual New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. Vaucresson also talks about his own philanthropic activities, including the Vaucresson Sausage Company’s support for Project Lazarus of New Orleans, an assisted living facility for people with AIDS; and his participation in the NO/AIDS Walk, which benefited HIV/AIDS research. Vaucresson talks about his plans for the future, and concludes this part of the interview by reflecting upon his legacy and the importance of The HistoryMakers’ project.

Video Oral History Interview with Vance Vaucresson, Section A2010\_056\_001\_007, TRT: 0:07:30  
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Vance Vaucresson narrates his photographs.