

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Leffall, LaSalle D.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr.,
Dates:	June 7, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:10:25).
Abstract:	Medical professor, oncologist, and surgeon Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr. (1930 - 2019) is the president of the American College of Surgeons and chairs the President's Cancer Panel. Leffall has authored over 150 articles, has taught over 4,500 medical students and trained at least 250 general surgery residents at the Howard University College of Medicine. Leffall was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 7, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_064
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dr. LaSalle Doheny Leffall, Jr. was born May 22, 1930, in Tallahassee, Florida, but grew up in Quincy, Florida. His parents, Lula Jourdan and LaSalle Leffall, Sr. met at Alabama Teachers College. Leffall graduated from Dr. Wallace S. Stevens High School at age 15 years in 1945. Awarded his B.S. degree summa cum laude from Florida A & M College in 1948, Leffall at age twenty-two earned his M.D. from Howard University College of Medicine. There, Dr. Burke Syphax, Dr. Jack White, Dr. W. Montague Cobb and the celebrated Dr. Charles R. Drew taught him.

Upon earning his M.D., Leffall continued his medical training as intern at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis; assistant resident in surgery at Freedman's Hospital from 1953 to 1954; assistant resident in surgery at D.C. General Hospital from 1954 to 1955; chief resident in surgery at Freedman's Hospital from 1956 to 1957 and senior fellow in cancer surgery at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital from 1957 to 1959. Beginning his military service at the rank of Captain, M. C., he served as chief of general surgery at the U. S. Army Hospital in Munich, Germany, from 1960 to 1961. Leffall joined Howard's faculty, in 1962, as an assistant professor and by 1970, he was chairman of the Department of Surgery, a position he held for twenty-five years. He was named the Charles R. Drew Professor in 1992, occupying the first endowed chair in the history of Howard's Department of Surgery.

Leffall has served as visiting professor at over 200 medical institutions in the U.S. and abroad and authored or coauthored over 130 articles and chapters. He is a diplomate of the American Board of Surgery and a fellow of both the American College of Surgeons and the American College of Gastroenterology. His professional life has been devoted to the study of cancer, especially among African Americans. In 1979, as president of the American Cancer Society, Leffall developed programs and emphasized the importance of this study for the benefit of the African American population and other ethnic groups. Cancers of the head and neck, breast, colorectum and soft

part sarcomas are his main areas of interest.

Surgeon, oncologist, medical educator and civic leader, and the recipient of many awards, Leffall has taught over 4,500 medical students and trained at least 250 general surgery residents. In 1995 he was elected president of the American College of Surgeons and in 2002 was named chairman of the President's Cancer Panel. He and his wife, Ruthie have one grown son, LeSalle, III.

Leffall passed away on May 26, 2019.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 7, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Medical professor, oncologist, and surgeon Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr. (1930 - 2019) is the president of the American College of Surgeons and chairs the President's Cancer Panel. Leffall has authored over 150 articles, has taught over 4,500 medical students and trained at least 250 general surgery residents at the Howard University College of Medicine.

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:

Leffall, LaSalle D.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Leffall, LaSalle D.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Oncologist

HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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 Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr., June 7, 2004. 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).

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 Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr., Section A2004_064_001_001, TRT: 0:29:23 ?

Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall talks about his parents, his childhood in Quincy, Florida, his decision at age nine to become a doctor after helping an injured bird and the strong encouragement he received from parents, teachers and the local African American physician. He relates his experiences at Florida A & M College which he started at age fifteen and where, in addition to his studies, he attended music and sports events, and pledged Alpha.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr., Section A2004_064_001_002, TRT: 0:30:37 ?

Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall recalls his experiences at Florida A&M College, telling anecdotes about some of his most influential teachers and FAM-C President William H. Gray. He goes on to talk about his studies at Howard University School of Medicine, including classes with luminaries such as Dr. Montague Cobb, Dr. Charles Drew, Dr. Burke Syphax and Dr. Jack White. He attended Dr. Drew's last class on the day before his death following an automobile accident in North Carolina and vividly recalls learning of his death. Leffall also talks about his own attempts to dispel the persistent rumors about Dr. Drew having died due to being refused medical care at a white hospital; he points out that although such discrimination was common, the other black physicians who were with Drew in the car said that he had received the best care available at a small hospital at that time.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr., Section A2004_064_001_003, TRT: 0:29:03 ?

Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr. discusses his post-med school education: his internship at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis, his surgical residency at Freeman's Hospital in Washington, D.C., a year as one of the first black residents in Georgetown's residency program at Gallinger Hospital and a two-year fellowship in cancer surgery at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. He talks about his marriage, his military service in Germany, his trips to other countries for research and humanitarian work, arising out of his activities with the American Cancer Society, of which he served as President in 1978-79. He also discusses issues of racial and socioeconomic cancer health disparities and work being done to educate minorities about cancer prevention and the importance of earlier diagnoses.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr., Section A2004_064_001_004, TRT: 0:31:09 ?

Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr. shares his pride in his son and remembers his parents and their deaths. He talks about his positions as president of the American Cancer Society and of the American College of Surgeons and his work with cancer organizations. He reflects on his legacy, goals yet to be accomplished, and what he believes the role of a teacher should be, and he offers advice for young black students who want to go into medicine today.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr., Section A2004_064_001_005, TRT: 0:10:13 ?