

Mike Curb Biography

[Download the PDF](#)

[Download the Word Document](#)

Mike Curb, California's former lieutenant governor, is one of the most prominent figures in the entertainment world and one of California State University, Northridge's most distinguished alumni. Born in Savannah, Georgia and raised in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley, Curb presides over his own independent record label, one of the largest in the nation, that has launched the careers of stars such as LeAnn Rimes, Tim McGraw, Wynonna Judd and Hank Williams Jr. Curb attended Northridge from 1962 to 1963, along with his mother Estella, when the campus was known as San Fernando Valley State College. Earlier this year, he was a recipient of the University's 2006 Distinguished Alumni Award.

During a distinguished career spanning more than 40 years, Curb has earned multi-faceted success as a songwriter, producer and record company owner, covering a wide range of musical styles. As an individual, he has written more than 400 songs, produced 25 gold or platinum-selling records, and received countless music industry awards, including the prestigious Producer of the Year Award from Billboard magazine in 1972. As the founder and chairman of Curb Records, Curb's company has produced more than 250 No. 1 records and been honored by Billboard magazine as 2001 Country Music Label of the Year. Curb also serves as chairman of the Mike Curb Family Foundation and of gospel music powerhouse Word Entertainment.

Starting as a student at Grant High School in the San Fernando Valley in the late 1950s, Curb began performing with his own bands and formed a vocal group, the Mike Curb Congregation. In later years, the group achieved worldwide success with many albums including "Burning Bridges," "Put Your Hand in the Hand," and "Softly Whispering I Love You." The Congregation also was seen on national television every week on the Glen Campbell variety show on CBS, and recorded No. 1 hit records including "The Candy Man" with Sammy Davis Jr. and "All for the Love of Sunshine" with Hank Williams Jr., the singer's first No. 1 single, which also was co-written by Curb.

Before those highlights, Curb began his "boy wonder" rise to commercial success in the music industry while a student at Cal State Northridge, then known as Valley State. It was on the Northridge campus in fall 1962 and spring/summer 1963 that Curb composed and recorded some of his earliest songs in the university's music building studios, and where he formed his first record company, a predecessor to Curb Records. His commercial breakthrough came the next year when Honda selected one of those songs, the Curb-penned "You Meet the Nicest People on a Honda (Go Little Honda)" for its national motorcycle advertising campaign. The success and attention garnered by that song opened the doors for the many successes that were to come.

During his long career, Curb's own writing credits include songs for Roy Orbison, Sammy Davis Jr., Hank Williams Jr., The Osmond Brothers, Donny & Marie Osmond, Freddie Jackson, Irene Cara, Bobby Vinton, Andy Williams, Wayne Newton, Anne Murray, Al Martino, Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme, Mae West, The Crickets, The Hondells, The Ventures, Steve Holy, Eddy Arnold, T.G. Sheppard and Solomon Burke. Particular Curb writing highlights include "It Was a Good Time" (a signature song for Liza Minnelli) and the theme song for Dick Clark's "American Bandstand" show.

Some of Curb's other early success came in composing and producing songs and soundtracks for movies, including the 1966 hit "Wild Angels" starring Peter Fonda and Nancy Sinatra, the music for the 1967 Billy Jack movie "The Born Losers," and "Burning Bridges," the theme for the 1970 Clint Eastwood movie "Kelly's Heroes." In all, Curb has composed or supervised music for more than 50 motion picture soundtracks in films featuring Frank Sinatra, Jimmy Stewart, George C. Scott, Jack Nicholson, John Cassavetes, Ernest Borgnine, Mickey Rooney, Ryan O'Neal, Bette Davis, Jennifer Lopez, Gwyneth Paltrow, Mike Myers, Cliff Robertson, George Kennedy and others.

In the 1960s, Curb's record label became an important part of the West Coast rock 'n' roll music scene, releasing early recordings by such artists as The Arrows (featuring Davie Allan), The Stone Ponies (featuring Linda Ronstadt), and The Electric Flag (featuring Mike Bloomfield and Buddy Miles). In 1969, Curb merged his company with MGM Records and became president of the MGM Co. He boosted MGM's standing with such hits as "Spill the Wine" by Eric Burdon and War, "One Bad Apple" by The Osmonds, "Natural Man" by Lou Rawls, "The Candy Man" by Sammy Davis Jr. and the Mike Curb Congregation, "I'm Leaving It All Up to You" by Donny and Marie Osmond, and Donny Osmond's worldwide signature song "Puppy Love," which Curb also produced.

During this period, Curb also served as president of Verve Records, the historic jazz label, and scored a coup by signing superstar Tony Bennett. While at Verve, Curb worked with musicians such as Jimmy Smith, Stan Getz, Chet Baker and Wes Montgomery. Curb also created the Verve "Golden Archive" series, preserving classic recordings from Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum, Charlie Parker, George Benson, Herbie Hancock and Louis Armstrong.

Curb's early success, and his start as a Northridge student, also led to a long collaboration with the Walt Disney Co. and now former Disney Chairman/CEO Michael D. Eisner, after whom Cal State Northridge's College of Education is named. Years before, Eisner as an ABC television executive commissioned Curb to compose and produce theme music for three ABC animated series. The Mike Curb Congregation recorded "Walt Disney's Greatest Hits," an album for Disney featuring contemporary versions of Disney classics that included a hit rendition of "It's a Small World." Curb supervised the soundtrack for Disney's "Lassie" movie. In recent years, Curb Records also released the multi-platinum soundtrack album for Disney's movie "Coyote Ugly," featuring four LeAnn Rimes songs by another Northridge alum, Grammy Award-winning songwriter Diane Warren.

After MGM was sold in 1974, Curb went on to build Curb Records and the Curb/Warner label, which released numerous top-selling singles from the mid-to-late 1970s. Within a short time, the company had five No. 1 records on the Billboard Chart including the Four Seasons' "December 1963 (Oh What A Night)," The Bellamy Brothers' "Let Your Love Flow," Shaun Cassidy's "Da Doo Ron Ron," Exile's "Kiss You All Over," and Debby Boone's "You Light Up My Life" (the biggest selling record of the decade).

During the 1970s, Curb also began venturing into public service. In 1976, he served as co-chair of the Ronald Reagan California Campaign for President and later was co-chair of President Gerald Ford's California campaign. In November 1978, Curb was elected California's lieutenant governor, the same year that Democrat Jerry Brown was elected governor. During his 1979 to 1983 term, Curb, a Republican, served as acting governor for about one year, guiding the state during disastrous floods, fires and a threatened prison guard strike. He also served on the University of California Board of Regents and the California State University Board of Trustees.

In 1982, Curb was elected chair of the National Conference of Lieutenant Governors. Then in 1983 and 1984, at President Reagan's request, Curb served as chairman of the Republican National Finance Committee during the president's re-election campaign, responsible for raising more than \$100 million.

After his stint in government, Curb returned to California and, together with then-Curb Records President Richard W. Whitehouse, went on to sign such emerging stars as Lyle Lovett, The Judds, Don and Phil Everly (The Everly Brothers), Sawyer Brown, Chris Hillman's Desert Rose Band and The Righteous Brothers. The latter gave Curb Records the platinum-selling album and single "Unchained Melody."

In 1984, Curb formed Burbank-based Curb Entertainment International Corp. to concentrate on film/television production and distribution. A member of the American Film Marketing Association, Curb Entertainment maintains a major presence at all of the major film and television markets. Curb's sister, Carole Curb Nemoy, serves as president of the company.

By the mid-1990s, Curb had moved his family and Curb Records to Nashville. This was because many of his recording artists were there, and because Curb's other business is auto racing. Curb cars driven by stars such as Dale Earnhardt, Richard Petty and others have competed for more than 25 years in the NASCAR circuit and in other major motor sports events including the Indianapolis 500. One highlight was the Curb-owned racing team scoring a victory at the famed Daytona International Speedway in 1984. In 2006, Curb was inducted into the West Coast Stock Car Hall of Fame.

Meanwhile, Curb Records' successes have continued. In 1997, Curb Records was Billboard's No. 1 country label in four major categories for albums and singles, and the No. 1 country label, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Among the label's top hits was "How Do I Live" by LeAnn Rimes, which was co-produced by Curb and written by fellow Northridge alum Diane Warren. The song earned Curb a Billboard award for the longest-running record in the history of the Billboard pop chart. He also received a Billboard award for co-producing Rimes' "You Light Up My Life," the only album ever to debut No. 1 on Billboard's Pop Chart, Country Chart and Contemporary Christian Chart.

Curb's current roster of exclusive recording artists includes Wynonna Judd, Tim McGraw, LeAnn Rimes, Hank Williams Jr., The Judds, Lyle Lovett, Jo Dee Messina, Sawyer Brown, Clay Walker, Steve Holy, Hal Ketchum, Trini Triggs, Ray Stevens, Blue County, Kimberley Locke, Rodney Atkins, Michael English, Ronnie and Tyler McDowell, Kaci, Natalie Grant, Fernando Ortega, Plumb, and Selah.

In the arena of gospel music, Curb in 2003 was named chairman of Word Entertainment after the industry's oldest gospel music label was acquired by Warner Bros. and Curb Records. The Curb Records-Warner Bros. venture extended a 40-year relationship that began in 1963 when the newly merged Reprise/Warner Records signed Curb, then an 18-year-old Northridge student, and his song "Hot Dawg" became the first single released by the new label.

Although often associated with country and gospel performers, Curb also has an enduring love of rhythm and blues music dating to his childhood living in the South Los Angeles/Compton area. Through the years, Curb also has signed such artists as Sammy Davis Jr., Lou Rawls, Gloria Gaynor, Richie Havens, Solomon Burke, the Sylvers, Richard Roundtree ("Shaft"), the Hues Corporation and the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Continuing that tradition, Curb Records has had major, recent hits with "Over and Over," a duet between Tim McGraw and the rapper Nelly, and "American Idol" finalist Kimberley Locke's debut single "8th World Wonder."

In addition to his record business, Curb serves as chair of the Mike Curb Family Foundation, which supports music education and works to restore historic music industry locations. Those include Elvis Presley's former home in Memphis and RCA Studio B, Columbia Studio A (the Quonset Hut), and the Johnny Cash Museum in Nashville. Curb also serves on governing boards of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and the Country Music Foundation (Country Music Hall of Fame). In 2006, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 16th annual Los Angeles Music Awards. He also has been inducted into the National Business Hall of Fame

Curb is the recipient of an honorary Doctor of Law degree from Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., and an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Belmont University in Nashville. The Mike Curb College of Entertainment and Music Business, which he supports, is the largest college at Belmont University. Curb also has endowed the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University, and serves on the governing board of Nashville's Fisk University, one of the nation's pioneering historically black institutions.

Curb's father Charles was an FBI agent. Curb is married to the former Linda Dunphy, daughter of famed Southern California television news anchor Jerry Dunphy. Curb and his wife have two adult daughters, Megan Carole and Courtney. Curb has been honored as Father of the Year by the National Father's Day Council. He and his family reside in Nashville, Tennessee.

August 2006



Additional Links

- [Imagine the Arts Center Home Page](#)

College of Arts, Media, and Communication

- [Highlights](#)
- [Profile](#)
- [Home Page](#)
- [Music Department Home Page](#)