

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with William Smith

PERSON

Smith, William Lee, 1929-

Alternative Names: William Smith;

Life Dates: January 3, 1929-February 29, 2008

Place of Birth: Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Residence: Conyers, Georgia

Occupations: Education Executive

Biographical Note

Senior education executive William L. Smith spent his professional career working to improve inner-city education. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 3, 1929, Smith developed a strong sense of sacrifice and community growing up during the Great Depression.

After completing high school, Smith received a presidential scholarship to Wiley College where he finished a year early, graduating with honors in January, 1949. He then won a scholarship to Boston University to continue his studies, but his plans were interrupted in the fall of 1950 when he enlisted in the U.S. Army at the outbreak of the Korean War. Smith helped integrate General Douglas MacArthur's famed honor guard and received a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart for his battlefield service. When he returned to the United States, Smith resumed his studies, earning his M.Ed. degree in 1955. Smith then was hired as a teacher and administrator in Cleveland's public schools, where he worked until 1968.

Smith continued his studies at Case Western Reserve University and just before receiving his PhD degree in education, he was asked in 1970 to join the U.S. Department of Education. He moved to Washington, D.C., and began a long and meritorious career with the Department of Education. There, Smith oversaw teacher training, educational development and vocational education. Starting in 1995, Smith worked as a senior advisor within the Department of Education.

Smith's writings on teacher education, administration and educational multiculturalism have appeared in some fifty publications. He represented the Department of Education abroad at several international conferences on education.

Smith passed away on February 29, 2008 at the age of 79. He was married to Audrey Morton Smith and had two adult children with his first wife, Mable.

Related Entries

Josiah Quincy [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Boston Technical High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Abraham Lincoln Junior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Claflin University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Wiley College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Case Western Reserve University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Cleveland Public Schools [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2002 to 2006]

Teacher and Administrator

United States Department of Education [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1970 to ?]

United States Department of Education [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1995 to ?]

Senior Advisor