

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with George Russell

PERSON

Russell, George L., 1929-

Alternative Names: George Russell;

Life Dates: March 19, 1929-

Place of Birth: Baltimore, Maryland, USA

Work: Baltimore, MD

Occupations: Lawyer; Political Campaign Manager

Biographical Note

George Levi Russell, Jr. was born on March 19, 1929 in Baltimore, Maryland. His mother was a homemaker and his father worked as a postal worker. He attended Baltimore City public schools and earned his high school diploma from Frederick Douglass high school in 1946. While in high school, he was sports editor of the school newspaper and a member of the debate team.

He earned his A.B. degree in economics from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, where he pledged Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity and was a member of the debate team. He earned his law degree from the University of Maryland in 1954. After earning his law degree, he was drafted into the army in 1954, where he practiced law and was in charge of Courts, Boards and Special Court-martials.

From 1956 to 1966, Russell was an associate at Brown, Allen, Watts, and Murphy and was later named as a partner in the firm. In 1967, Russell became the first African American to sit on the Circuit Court in Maryland as well as becoming the first Black to sit on an Appellate Court in the state. From 1968 to 1974, Russell worked as the first African American City Solicitor for Baltimore City. Continuing to break barriers, Russell served as the first African American President of the Maryland Bar Association from 1973 to 1974. Leaving the Maryland Bar Association, he was a partner at Russell & Thompson from 1974 to 1986, and then worked as a partner for Josey, Gibson, Allen and Mitchell. In 1982, he established Harbor Bank, one of the largest minority owned banks in the country. In 1986, Russell merged his all black firm with a predominately white firm, Piper and Marbury, one of the top 100 law firms in the country – the merger was a historic first in the nation.

In 2002, Russell was appointed chairperson of a commission that would be responsible

for building the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture, the largest museum on the East Coast dedicated to African American history and culture. The museum is scheduled open in January of 2005.

Related Entries

Frederick Douglass High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

H.S.

Lincoln University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

A.B.

University of Maryland [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

J.D.

Henry Highland Garnet Elementary School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Josey, Gibson, Allen & Mitchell [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Partner

United States Army [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1954 to 1956]

Brown, Allen, Watts & Murphy [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1973 to 1973]

Partner

Maryland Circuit Court [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1967 to ?]

City of Baltimore [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2004 to 2009]

City Solicitor

Russell & Thompson [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2014 to ?]

Founder

Harbor Bank [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1982 to ?]

Founder

Kappa Alpha Psi [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Life Member

Sigma Pi Phi [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Gamma Boule

NAACP [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Golden Heritage Life membership

Reginald F. Lewis Maryland Museum of African American History and Culture
[MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Chairman

University of Maryland School of Law [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board of Visitors

National Aquarium in Baltimore [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board of Governors

Baltimore City Historical Society [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Trustee

Constellation Energy Group [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Director

Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, Baltimore Branch [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Chairman of the Board of Directors

Villa Julie College [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Trustee