

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Owen Nichols

PERSON

Nichols, Owen D.

Alternative Names: Owen Nichols;

Life Dates: April 8, 1929-May 19, 2018

Place of Birth: Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Residence: Silver Spring, MD

Occupations: Physicist

Biographical Note

Owen Douglas Nichols was born on April 8, 1929 in Raleigh, North Carolina. His mother was a homemaker and his father worked as a janitor at Meredith College. He earned his high school diploma from Washington High School in 1948 where he was active in the band and Glee Club and valedictorian of his class.

Nichols attended Shaw University from 1948 until 1950 on an academic scholarship. While at Shaw, he worked as a lab assistant and pledged Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. In 1950, he joined the United States Army, and attended Officers Candidate School in Fort Raleigh, Kansas. He was also accepted in the Army Corps of Engineering program and served his country in Korea. He retired from the army in 1953, returned to Shaw, and earned his bachelor's of science degree in chemistry in 1955. Nichols then went on to earn his master's degree in physical chemistry from Howard University in 1958.

From 1958 until 1959, Nichols worked as an associate professor of chemistry at South Carolina State College. Leaving South Carolina State, he was a Research Chemist at the United States Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, D.C., until 1962. Nichols spent the next four years working as a physical science analyst for the Defense Documentation Center in Alexandria, Virginia. From 1966 until 1968, he worked as a deputy director for the National Air Pollution Control Administration, where he was responsible for processing technical information on air pollution. In 1969, Nichols was recruited to Howard University by his former classmate at Shaw, James Cheek, who was then serving as Howard's President. Nichols served in various positions at Howard for nearly twenty years. When he retired in 1988 he was the vice president for administration and secretary of the Board of Trustees.

Since 1989, Nichols has served as an advisor, coordinator and organizer for the African

American Festival of Academic Achievement, an event highlighting the accomplishments of Montgomery County Maryland's youth. In 1995, Nichols was appointed to the Montgomery College (Maryland's largest community college) Board of Trustees.

Nichols has received numerous awards and honors for his civic, community and educational achievements. He is the author of several publications including a book in memory of his father, titled Things My Father Taught Me, which was published in 1998.

Nichols passed away on May 19, 2018.

Related Entries

Washington High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Howard University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Master's

St. Monica's School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Shaw University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Howard University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to 1988]

Vice President for Administration

Howard University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to 1988]

Secretary of the Board of Trustees

United States Army [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1950 to 1953]

Army Engineer

South Carolina State College [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1996 to 1998]

Associate Professor

United States Naval Research Laboratory [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1959 to 1962]

Research Chemist

Defense Documentation Center [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1966 to 1974]

Physical Science Analyst

National Air Pollution Control Administration [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1977 to 1978]

Deputy Director

Howard University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1969 to ?]

Professor

African American Festival of Academic Achievement [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1989 to ?]

Advisor, Coordinator and Organizer

Montgomery College Board of Trustees [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1995 to ?]

Member

[MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity [MEMBEROf]
[from 1950 to ?]