

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Ron Kirk

PERSON

Kirk, Ron

Alternative Names: The Honorable Ron Kirk;

Life Dates: June 27, 1954-

Place of Birth: Austin, Texas, USA

Residence: Dallas, TX

Work: Dallas, TX

Occupations: Mayor

Biographical Note

Former Mayor of Dallas Ron Kirk was born in Austin, Texas on June 27, 1954. While attending John H. Reagan High School, Kirk was elected president of the student body. He also played basketball and traveled in Europe with the school choir. Upon graduation in 1972, Kirk enrolled in Austin College, where he earned his B.A. degree in 1976 with honors in political science and sociology. From there, he went on to earn his J.D. degree from the University of Texas School of Law in Austin.

Kirk then moved to Dallas and began practicing law with the firm of Bennett & Cain. In 1981, he left private practice and went to work for then Texas Senator Lloyd Bentsen. When Bentsen was appointed U.S. Secretary of the Treasury by President Bill Clinton, Kirk accompanied him to Washington, D.C. In 1994, he left Washington and returned to his native Texas, where he became Secretary of State under Texas governor Ann Richards. The following year, at the urging of the Dallas business community, Kirk ran for mayor of Dallas, and won sixty-two percent of the vote, becoming the first African American mayor of Dallas, and of any major Texas city. As mayor, Kirk gained a reputation for building coalitions. He also instituted the "Dallas Plan," his vision for the City of Dallas. Kirk was widely credited with jump-starting the city's economy. In 1999, Kirk was reelected in a landslide election, winning seventy-four percent of the vote. He stepped down as mayor in 2001 and ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate seat vacated by Phil Gramm. Kirk returned to private practice, joining the firm of Gardere Wynne Sewell, where he served as a partner. In 2009, President Barack Obama appointed Kirk as U.S. Trade Representative.

Kirk remains active in the community, as former president of the Dallas Zoological

Society and as chair of the South Dallas/Fair Park Trust Fund Advisory Board. He also serves as a trustee of Austin College, as well as on the board of directors for Brinker International, Dean Foods and PetSmart.

Kirk and his wife, Matrice Ellis-Kirk, have two daughters.

Kirk was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 25, 2004.

Related Entries

Blackshear Elementary Fine Arts Academy [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University Junior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Pearce Junior High [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Reagan Early College High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Austin College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Bennett & Cain [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1999 to 2000]

Attorney

Gardere, Wynne and Sewell [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Partner

City of Dallas [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Chief Lobbyist

Office of Senator Lloyd Bentsen [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1981 to ?]

Johnson & Gibbs [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1990 to 1991]

Attorney

Texas State Purchasing and General Services Commission [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1991 to ?]

State of Texas [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1994 to ?]

Secretary of State

City of Dallas, Texas [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1995 to 2001]

Mayor

United States Government [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2009 to ?]

Trade Representative

Dallas Zoological Society [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

[MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]