

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Vera Thelma Shorter

PERSON

Shorter, Vera T., 1922-

**Alternative Names:** Vera Thelma Shorter; Vera Thelma Shorter ;

**Life Dates:** December 22, 1922-February 26, 2021

**Place of Birth:** Huntington, New York, USA

**Residence:** Vineyard Haven, MA

**Occupations:** Community Activist

## Biographical Note

Auditor, community activist, and writer, Vera T. Shorter, was born on December 22, 1922, in Huntington, New York. Raised in Huntington on the Long Island section of New York, Shorter and her family moved to nearby Northport when she entered high school in 1936. After graduating from Northport High School in 1940, Shorter studied bookkeeping at Eastman Business School in New York City. After several years as a secretary and bookkeeper, Shorter earned a certificate in accounting from Pace College in Brooklyn, New York. During her early career as an accountant, Shorter was an active member of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, and an activist with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Shorter was also a contributing writer to *Black Odyssey*, a travel and leisure magazine, and *Our World*, writing feature articles in the Fairs and Food section.

Between 1965 and 1973, Shorter served as the supervisor of tax auditors at the Internal Revenue Service headquarters in Manhattan. During her last three years at the IRS (1973-1976), Shorter was the equal employment opportunity officer; she was the first African American to attain these positions with the IRS in New York.

In 1976, Shorter moved to Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts when her husband, Rufus B. Shorter (1920-1980), was appointed superintendent of the Martha's Vineyard Public Schools. After the move to Martha's Vineyard, Shorter became an influential and respected civic and community leader, becoming involved in virtually every aspect of the black community and in a range of educational and civic activities in the larger community. For ten years, Shorter coordinated a celebrity tennis tournament to raise money for the Nathan Mayhew Seminars, an adult education institution. Shorter served on the executive committee of the Martha's Vineyard branch of the NAACP, and as a member of the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee to the Vineyard schools.

Shorter also served as the president of the Lagoon Pond Association and was a charter member of the Island's branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. For many years Shorter also assisted the elderly in preparing their income tax returns.

Shorter passed away on February 26, 2021.

## Related Entries

**Northport High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Queens College, City University of New York** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Eastman Business College** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Pace University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Kanak Company** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Bookkeeper**

**Dr. James Lee** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Office Assistant**

**New Jersey Contracting Company** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Bookkeeper**

**Independent Consultant** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Internal Revenue Service** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1965 to 1976]

**Supervisor of tax auditors; equal employment opportunity officer**

**NAACP** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Active Member**

**Association for the Study of African American Life and History** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Lagoon Pond Association** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]