

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Thomas Barnwell

PERSON

Barnwell, Thomas, 1935-

Alternative Names: Thomas Barnwell; Thomas C. Barnwell

Life Dates: June 2, 1935-

Place of Birth: Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, USA

Residence: Hilton Head Island, SC

Occupations: Nonprofit Executive

Biographical Note

Thomas Curtis Barnwell, Jr. was born on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina on June 2, 1935. His parents were Hannah White, a schoolteacher, and Thomas Barnwell, a farmer. Barnwell grew up on Hilton Head Island when the only transportation on and off the island was by boat. The native islanders were self sufficient by growing fresh vegetables, raising cows and hogs, fishing, catching shrimp and crabs and hunting deer, rabbit and raccoon. Barnwell graduated from St. Helena High School on St. Helena Island, South Carolina in 1954 and enrolled in Clafin College in Orangeburg, South Carolina.

After one year at Clafin College, Barnwell joined the United States Air Force. In 1959, he received an honorable discharge and enrolled at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. In 1960, he began working as a longshoreman, Local 1414 in Savannah, Georgia.

Barnwell traveled extensively to continue his education. He studied sociology at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee in 1961; community development at the University of West Indies in 1963; group dynamics at the University of Ontario in Bethel, Maine in 1964 and community development and community education at the University of Puerto Rico.

Barnwell began his work in community service at Penn Community Service, Inc. While at the Penn Center, he worked in community organization, program planning, federal program orientation and implementation. His community service work continued as he held positions as Assistant Director for Beaufort-Jasper Hampton Economic Opportunity Commission, Executive Director of Beaufort-Jasper-Hampton Comprehensive Health Services, Inc. and the Regional Director of National Consumer

Cooperative Bank, Charleston South Carolina branch. Barnwell is a former board member of the Bluffton Oyster Cooperative and the Hilton Head Fishing Cooperative. He testified before the United States Committee on Hunger and Malnutrition and Human Needs in 1969, and participated in President John F. Kennedy's To Fulfill These Rights Committee.

Barnwell, who was involved in securing affordable housing, healthcare and employment for the natives of Hilton Head Island, is a land developer and a private business owner of rental properties.

Barnwell is married to Susan, his wife of over forty years. They have three adult children.

Barnwell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on January 30, 2007.

Related Entries

Squire Pope Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

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

Tuskegee University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Fisk University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of the West Indies [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of Puerto Rico [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Penn Normal Industrial and Agricultural School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

St. Helena High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Claflin College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Penn Center [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

field director for community development

Beaufort-Jasper Comprehensive Health Services, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Executive Director

Beaufort-Jasper Economic Opportunity Commission [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from ? to ?]

Assistant Director

National Consumer Cooperative Bank [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from ? to ?]

Regional Director

Barnwell Family Associates, LLC [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from ? to ?]

Co-Founder

NAACP [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Member