

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Esther A.H. Hopkins

PERSON

Hopkins, Esther Arvilla Harrison, 1926-

Alternative Names: Esther A.H. Hopkins;

Life Dates: September 18, 1926-May 19, 2021

Place of Birth: Stamford, Connecticut, USA

Residence: Oak Bluff, MA

Occupations: Chemist

Biographical Note

Chemist, city council member, and patent attorney Esther Arvilla Harrison Hopkins was born on September 18, 1926 in Stamford, Connecticut. Working as household servants, Hopkins's parents encouraged her and her siblings to pursue their education. In 1947, Hopkins graduated from Boston University with her B.A. degree in chemistry. Just two years later, she obtained her M.S. degree in chemistry from Howard University.

Hopkins taught chemistry at Virginia State College for a short period of time before she decided to pursue research. Hopkins worked with companies such as the New England Institute for Medical Research as an assistant researcher in biophysics and the American Cyanamid Stamford Research Laboratory as a research chemist. Hopkins studied at Yale University, where she received her second M.S. degree in chemistry and her Ph.D. degree in chemistry in 1962 and 1967, respectively. She continued her work at the American Cyanamid Stamford Research Laboratory while she earned these degrees.

Following the completion of her Ph.D. program, Hopkins was hired as a supervisory research chemist with the Polaroid Corporation, where she led the Emulsion Coating and Analysis Laboratory, checking the chemical composition of the film coating for uniformity. During this time, Hopkins also developed an interest in the work of the patent department and returned to school. She received her J.D. degree from Suffolk University Law School. Hopkins retired from Polaroid Corporation in 1989 and began work as the deputy general counsel at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. In 1999, Hopkins became the first African American selectman of Framingham, Massachusetts. She stepped down from this post in 2005, but has remained active in the community. Hopkins is married to Ewell Hopkins, a social worker and minister. They have one son, Ewell Hopkins, Jr.

Hopkins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 13, 2012.

Hopkins passed away on May 19, 2021.

Related Entries

Howard University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.S. degree in organic chemistry

Yale University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.S. degree in chemistry

Yale University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Ph.D. degree in biophysical chemistry

Suffolk University Law School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

J.D.

Boston University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A. degree in chemistry

American Cyanamid's Stamford Research Laboratory [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to 1967]

Research Chemist

Virginia State University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1949 to 1955]

Chemistry Instructor

New England Institute for Medical Research [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1955 to ?]

Assistant Researcher, Biophysics

Polaroid Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1967 to 1989]

Emulsion Coating and Analysis Laboratory Lead

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1989 to 1999]

Deputy General Counsel

Framingham, Massachusetts [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1999 to 2005]

Selectman

American Chemical Society (ACS) [MEMBEROF]
[from 2009 to ?]

Eastern Massachusetts Junior Achievement [MEMBEROF]
[from 2015 to 2015]

Clara Barton Camp for Girls with Diabetes [MEMBEROF]
[from 2014 to 2014]

Regional Laboratory for Education Improvement of the Northeast and the Islands
[MEMBEROF]
[from 2014 to 2014]

Association of Yale Alumni [MEMBEROF]
[from 2014 to 2014]

Unitarian-Universalist Association [MEMBEROF]
[from 2014 to 2014]

League of Women Voters [MEMBEROF]
[from 2006 to 2006]

Boston University Alumni Association [MEMBEROF]
[from 2011 to 2016]

Head