

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Clarence Irving, Sr.

PERSON

Irving, Clarence L., Sr., 1924-2014

Alternative Names: Clarence Irving, Sr.;

Life Dates: August 21, 1924-March 27, 2014

Place of Birth: Prince George County, Virginia, USA

Residence: Middle Island, NY

Work: Middle Island, NY

Occupations: Cultural Activist; ;

Biographical Note

Cultural activist Clarence L. Irving, Sr. was born on August 21, 1924 in Prince George County, Virginia. His father, Paul Irving, was a farmer; his mother, Elizabeth Claiborne, a housewife. After attending Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School and Randall, Jr. High School in Washington, D.C., Irving moved to New York City where he graduated from the Brooklyn Naval Shipyard in 1952 and Brooklyn Technical Evening School in 1960.

From 1944 to 1953, Irving worked mechanist at the U.S. Naval Yard. In April of 1946, he organized his first baseball team in Brooklyn, New York. Then, in 1949, Irving's team, the Falcons, became the undefeated championship team in the Betsy Hyde Park Baseball League Junior Division. He began working for Con Edison in 1953 as an electrical planner in the electrical power plant. Irving continued coaching youth baseball and went on to organize the Bisons, which by 1955 became very successful in the Brooklyn Kiwanis League, winning seven championship seasons in three divisions. On September 9, 1955, the Bisons won the New York State Kiwanis Baseball Senior Division Championship at Abner Doubleday Field in Cooperstown, New York, making it the first time a baseball team with an African American manager and coach played on the field. In 1956, Irving retired from managing youth baseball teams and developed the Bison Athletic Club where he served as a mentor.

In 1972, Irving conceived the idea of commemorating African American Women on U.S. postage stamps. Two years later, the U.S. Postal Service created a new series of stamps commemorating African Americans, "The Black Heritage U.S.A. Series." Then, in 1984, Irving founded the Black American Heritage Foundation (BAHF) to document,

preserve, and disseminate information about the accomplishments of African Americans. He also founded the Music History Archive in 1989, which serves as a repository for many original scores, early recordings, instruments, costumes, photographs, sheet music, and other artifacts related to musicians.

Irving holds the sole distinction of being honored by three elected women borough presidents of New York City: the Honorable Claire Shilman of Queens; the Honorable Helen M. Marshall of Queens; and the Honorable C. Virginia Fields of Manhattan. In 1996, New York Governor George E. Pataki, along with New York Senator Alton R. Waldon and New York City Assemblywoman Barbara Clark, named April 8th “Clarence L. Irving, Sr. Day.” He received the 1999 Carter G. Woodson Award and the 2000 Humanitarian Award from Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. In 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives honored Irving by renaming the U.S. Postal Service Office in Jamaica, New York the “Clarence L. Irving, Sr. Post Office Building.”

Irving passed away in March of 2014 at the age of 90.

Clarence L. Irving, Sr. was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 11, 2013.

Related Entries

Brooklyn Technical High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Brooklyn Naval Ship Yard [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

[EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Time Herald Newspapers [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1937 to ?]

Newspaper Delivery

Brooklyn Navy Yard [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1986 to 1994]

Machinist

Consolidated Edison [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1953 to 1984]

Electrical Safety Monitor

Bison's Athletic Club [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Founder

Black America Heritage Foundation [MEMBEROF]

[from 1984 to ?]

Founder

York College Music History Archive [MEMBEROF]

[from 1989 to ?]

Founder

Greater Jamaica Development Corporation [MEMBEROF]

[from 1990 to ?]

Board Member

Lewis H. Latimer Fund [MEMBEROF]

[from 1993 to 2006]

Board Member