

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Vera Ricketts

PERSON

Ricketts, Vera, 1922-2019

Alternative Names: Vera Ricketts;

Life Dates: October 20, 1922-October 26, 2019

Place of Birth: Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Residence: Los Angeles, CA

Work: CA

Occupations: Pharmacist ; Civic Leader

Biographical Note

Pharmacist and civic leader Vera Ricketts was born on October 20, 1922 in Indianapolis, Indiana to Sarah Chilton Phelps and Robert Phelps, Sr. There, Ricketts attended Hazel Hart Hendricks School 37 and Crispus Attucks High School where she graduated in 1941. She later went on to attend Butler University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and graduated with her B.S. degree in pharmacology in 1948. As an undergraduate student, she was an active member of the Congress of Racial Equality.

Ricketts began her career as a pharmacist at Howard University in Washington, D.C. In 1958, Ricketts became the first female African American pharmacist at Duke University Hospital in Durham, North Carolina. During this period, she also helped establish the pharmacy at Lincoln Hospital in Durham, where she trained nurse practitioners in pharmacology. Ricketts eventually returned with her husband, William Newton Ricketts, to Washington, D.C., where she worked at the District of Columbia General Hospital pharmacy. In 1960, she and her husband moved to Los Angeles, California, where she worked as an administrator at his medical practice. An active community leader, Ricketts advocated for the creation of the Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital in Los Angeles' South Central neighborhood. Ricketts went on to serve as the president of the Auxiliary to the National Medical Association from 1981 to 1982.

In addition to her professional career, Ricketts was also active in other community organizations in the Los Angeles area. In 1979, Ricketts founded the Inglewood Pacific Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, and she served as its chapter president from 1983

to 1985. Ricketts also founded the Theta Mu Omega Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Through her membership in the sorority, she volunteered on the board of the Jenesse Center, Inc., a shelter for battered women and children in Los Angeles. In 2017, Ricketts and her husband, William Newton Ricketts, received recognition for their thirty plus years of humanitarian work in Jamaica.

Ricketts and her husband have four daughters: Verlie Ricketts Lockings, Renee Ricketts, Victoria Ricketts Wilson and Wendy Ricketts Greene.

Vera Ricketts was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 23, 2017.

Ricketts passed away on October 26, 2019.

Related Entries

Hazel Hart Hendricks School 37 [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Crispus Attucks Medical Magnet High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Butler University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S. degree

Howard University Hospital; Freedmen's Hospital [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Pharmacist

D.C. General Hospital [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Pharmacist

Duke University Hospital [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1958 to ?]

Pharmacist

American Cancer Society [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

The Links, Inc. [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Coordinator

National Medical Association [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

National President

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated [MEMBEROF]
[from 1966 to ?]

