

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Bettye Jo Harris

PERSON

Harris, Betty Jo, 1934-

Alternative Names: Bettye Jo Harris;

Life Dates: February 24, 1934-

Place of Birth: Arkansas, USA

Residence: Kaneohe, Hawaii

Occupations: Nonprofit Executive

Biographical Note

Program administrator Bettye Jo Harris was born on February 24, 1934 in Arkansas to Cornelia Kilgore. After graduating from Nevada County Training School in 1950, Harris attended Arkansas Baptist College before transferring to Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical & Normal (AM&N) College in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. She went on to receive her M.S. degree in public health from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

Harris clerked at the Internal Revenue Service in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, before joining the University of Minnesota department of admissions as a clerk. She went on to serve as an administrator for the AM&N College department of agriculture and as a program developer for the University of Hawaii School of Public Health. From 1969 to 1972, Harris and her family lived in Morocco and Tunisia, where Harris' husband, entomologist Ernest Harris, served as the coordinator of the North Africa Regional Mediterranean Fruit Fly Suppression Program. Harris later joined the Arthritis Foundation Hawaii as a health educator; and, in the 1980s, she served as executive director of the Kalihi-Palama Immigrant Service Center. Harris then became an editor of the Afro Hawaii News, during which she led the campaign to establish the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in Hawai'i. In the 1990s, she served as executive director of the residential substance abuse treatment center Hina Mauka.

An active member of St. Christopher's Church, Harris served as deputy Diocese of Hawai'i from 1982 to 2006. She served on the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee (JPIC) and finance committee of the Episcopal Church Executive Council. Harris was elected vice president of the Hawaii Diocesan Council in 2000. In 2012, Harris served on the Honolulu African American Film Festival Committee. She also served as the chair of fundraising for the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

In 2011, Harris was appointed to the Canon of the Episcopal Church, Dioceses of Hawai'i by Bishop Robert Fitzpatrick. In 2013, she received the Distinguished Service Award for Lifetime Achievement from the NAACP of Hawai'i.

Harris married the late Ernest Harris on April 11, 1953. They had three children: Mark, Tanya, and Greg.

Betty Jo Harris was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on December 13, 2019.

Related Entries

Nevada County Training School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Arkansas Baptist College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

AM&N College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of Hawaii at Manoa [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.S.

Spiegel Department Store [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Elevator Operator

Internal Revenue Service [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Clerk

University of Minnesota Admissions [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Clerk

AM&N College Department of Agriculture [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Administrator

Arthritis Foundation Hawaii [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Health Educator

Kalihi-Palama Immigrant Service Center [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Executive Director

Hina Mauka [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Executive Director

Alpha Kappa Alpha [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Chair of Fundraising

Episcopal Church Leadership Team Executive Council [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Finance Committee

Episcopal Church [MEMBEROF]

[from 1982 to 2006]

Deputy Diocese of Hawaii

Episcopal Church Executive Council, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee [MEMBEROF]

[from 1955 to ?]

Member

Hawaiian Diocesan Council [MEMBEROF]

[from 2000 to ?]

Vice President

Honolulu African American Film Festival [MEMBEROF]

[from 2012 to ?]

Committee Member