

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Shelley Stewart

PERSON

Stewart, Shelley, 1934-

Alternative Names: Shelley Stewart;

Life Dates: September 24, 1934-

Place of Birth: Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Residence: Sterret, AL

Work: Birmingham, AL

Occupations: Media Executive; Telecommunications Chief Executive

Biographical Note

Media executive Shelley Stewart was born on September 24, 1934 in Birmingham, Alabama to Huell Stewart and Mattie C. Stewart. He graduated from Rosedale High School in Birmingham, Alabama and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, where he served from 1952 to 1953.

After his military service, Stewart returned to Birmingham and was hired by WEDR-AM as a radio personality known as, "Shelley The Playboy." By 1958, Stewart left Alabama to work for WOKJ-AM in Jackson, Mississippi. In the 1960s, Stewart worked for WENN-AM and served as the on-air voice of the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham, in 1967, he co-founded Steiner Advertising, now known as O2. In the 1970s, Stewart left WENN-AM and began working at WATV-FM with Dr. Erskine Fausch. He and Fausch went on to acquire WATV-AM, which became the most popular radio station in Birmingham. In 2002, Stewart and Fausch sold WATV-AM to Sheridan Broadcasting and Stewart retired from broadcasting the same year. He then founded the Mattie C. Stewart Foundation in 2007, in an effort to reduce the dropout rate and increase the graduation rate of high school students. In 2015, he sold his shares in O2 to four members of the company's management team.

Stewart also authored two books, *The Road South: A Memoir* and *Mattie C.'s Boy: The Shelley Stewart Story*.

Stewart was awarded the Footsteps to Freedom Award from the 16th Street Foundation in 1999, the Community Service Award from the National Association of Black Journalists in 2013, the Drum Major of Justice Award from the National Southern

Christian Leadership Conference, and the World Conference of Mayors' Outstanding People of the World Award. Stewart was also named a Pioneer of Radio Inductee by the Smithsonian Institution in 1996, inducted into the Black Radio Hall of Fame, honored as a "Living Legend" by Warner Bros. Records, and recognized by Coca-Cola Bottling Company as one of the top ten most recognized African Americans in the State of Alabama. Stewart and Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland co-founded and lead Birmingham Kitchen Table, and in 2013, he was named *alumnus honoris causa* one of the university's highest recognitions for non-graduates, for his role in the civil rights movement and his work in the community.

Stewart has two daughters, Sherri and Corlette.

Shelley Stewart was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on May 2, 2017.

Related Entries

Hudson Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Rosedale High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

WATV Radio [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

WENN Radio [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

WWBCO Radio [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

o2ideas [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1967 to 2015]

CEO and Founder

The Mattie C. Stewart Foundation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2007 to ?]

President