

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with William Bonaparte, Jr.

PERSON

Bonaparte, William, Jr., 1942-

Alternative Names: William Bonaparte, Jr.;

Life Dates: December 11, 1942-May 25, 2019

Place of Birth: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Work: Chicago, IL

Occupations: Telecommunications Entrepreneur

Biographical Note

Entrepreneur William Bonaparte, Jr., was born in Chicago, Illinois, on December 11, 1942. Growing up in the South Side neighborhood of Princeton Park, Bonaparte was inspired to achieve by his seventh-grade teacher Barbara Sizemore. While in school, Bonaparte was also active in music, playing in the Bobby Blue Band, a local jazz ensemble. Bonaparte went on to attend Wilson Junior College, and then Chicago Technical College.

Bonaparte went to work for Illinois Bell in 1963, becoming the first African American PBX (Private Business Exchange) installer ever hired by the company. While with Illinois Bell, in 1968, Bonaparte was promoted to foreman of operations in the Loop, Chicago's busy financial district. By 1971, Bonaparte was working in a management role, and in 1976, he graduated from the Milwaukee School of Engineering with a degree in electrical engineering. In 1984, Bonaparte left Illinois Bell for AT&T, where he became area manager of Chicago south services.

Bonaparte went into business for himself in 1986, capitalizing on the court-ordered breakup of Bell Telephone System; he formed Bonaparte Connections, a wiring company, to fill the void left by Bell. In 1991, Bonaparte founded Bonaparte Corporation, an electrical contracting firm. From that point on, Bonaparte watched sales steadily climb, grossing more than \$8.5 million in 1996. In 1999, Bonaparte founded Bonaparte Properties, a restoration contracting firm.

Bonaparte was active in the community as well, serving on the executive board of the Electrical Contractors Association; the board of the Cosmopolitan Chamber of

Commerce; and as chairman of Rotary/One Chicago. Bonaparte also served as a member of the Chicago Minority Business Development Council; the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce; and the Executives Club of Chicago. Bonaparte received the Cosmopolitan Chamber of Commerce and Kennedy-King College Small Business of the Year Award; the AT&T Keystone Award for Excellence; and was a finalist for the Ernst & Young LLP Entrepreneur of the Year Award for High Technology.

Bonaparte passed away on May 25, 2019.

William Bonaparte, Jr. was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 9, 2003.

Related Entries

Illinois Bell Telephone Company [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1963 to ?]

Private Business Exchange Installer

Illinois Bell Telephone Company [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1968 to ?]

Loop Operations Foreman

Illinois Bell Telephone Company [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1971 to ?]

Manager

AT&T [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1984 to ?]

Chicago South Services Area Manager

Bonaparte Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1986 to ?]

Founder

Bonaparte Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1991 to ?]

Founder

Bonaparte Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1999 to ?]

Founder