

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Edward Brooke

PERSON

Brooke, Edward W. (Edward William), 1919-2015

Alternative Names: The Honorable Edward Brooke;

Life Dates: October 26, 1919-January 3, 2015

Place of Birth: Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Residence: Miami, FL

Occupations: U.S. Senator

Biographical Note

Edward Brooke, III was born in Washington, D.C., on October 26, 1919. His father, Edward Brooke, Jr., was an attorney for the Veterans Administration for more than fifty years, and his mother, Helen, later worked on all of Brooke's political campaigns. Brooke entered Howard University at the age of sixteen, and earned his B.A. degree in sociology in 1941. After graduation, Brooke entered the U.S. Army and was sent overseas. A decorated captain in the all-black 366th Combat Infantry Regiment, Brooke defended men in military tribunals. During the Italian campaign, Brooke disguised himself as an Italian, crossing enemy lines to meet with the Italian Partisans and facing Nazi and Fascist troops.

Returning from World War II and experienced in legal proceedings, Brooke enrolled in Boston University Law School, earning an LL.B. in 1948 and an LL.M. a year later, as well as serving as the editor of the school's Law Review. While practicing law in Boston, Brooke began seeking political office. Despite good showings in several races between 1950 and 1960, he failed to win. However, in 1960, he was appointed chairman of the Boston Finance Commission, where he exposed corruption in many city departments. His popularity high from his work there, Brooke was elected to the office of Massachusetts Attorney General, becoming the first African American to hold that post in the nation. He remained in the office for two terms, and in 1966, he won election to the U.S. Senate, where he was the first African American to be elected by popular vote, the first to be seated since Reconstruction and later the only to be re-elected.

During his first term in the Senate, Brooke spent a great deal of time on the issue of the

Vietnam War, traveling to Asia on fact-finding missions. Upon his return, he requested that the United States cease using napalm. He also began calling for an end to trade with South Africa because of its apartheid policies. In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed him to the National Commission on Civil Disorders, which made recommendations that ultimately took shape as the 1968 Civil Rights Act. Brooke later challenged Richard Nixon's Supreme Court nominees Hainsworth and Carswell, even though he had supported Nixon's bid for the presidency. Brooke later became the first senator to call for Nixon's resignation. Leaving Congress in 1979, Brooke spent another six years in private practice before retiring.

Brooke received thirty-four honorary degrees from the nation's most prestigious colleges and universities and numerous other awards, including the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP and the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit from the Italian Government. In 2000, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts dedicated a courthouse in his honor.

Brooke passed away on January 3, 2015 at the age of 95.

Related Entries

Paul Laurence Dunbar High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

HS diploma

Howard University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

BS

Boston University School of Law [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

LL.B.

Boston University School of Law [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

LL.M.

Boston Finance Commission [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19610101 to 19630101]

Chairman

State of Massachusetts [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19630102 to 19670101]

Attorney General

United States Senate [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19670120 to 19790119]

United States Senator

C. Splar & Bok [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19790601 to 19850530]

Of Counsel

O'Connor & Hannan [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 19790630 to 19850531]

Partner

American Revolutionary Bicentennial Administration [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Chair

National Low Income Housing Coalition [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Chair

Boston Bank of Commerce [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Chair

Boston University [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Northeastern University [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Maret School [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Highland School, Warrenton, Virginia [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Massachusetts Historical Society [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Eastern Vice-President

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Chairman, World Policy Council

Opera Company of Boston [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board of Directors

Washington Performing Arts Society [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Board of Directors

Eisenhower Foundation for the Prevention of Violence [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Board of Directors

American Veterans of World War II [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Council on Foreign Relations [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

, Library of Congress.