

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Darwin N. Davis, Sr.

PERSON

Davis, Darwin Nathaniel,  
1932-2006

**Alternative Names:** Darwin N. Davis, Sr.;

**Life Dates:** April 10, 1932-April 16, 2006

**Place of Birth:** Flint, Michigan, USA

**Residence:** Stamford, Connecticut

**Work:** New York City, New York

**Occupations:** Insurance Executive

## Biographical Note

Darwin Nathaniel Davis, retired senior vice president of AXA Financial (formerly Equitable Life Insurance), was born on April 10, 1932, in Flint, Michigan; his maternal grandfather managed General Motors Executive Garage, and his father, Abner Davis, became the first black postal clerk in Flint. After attending

Clark Elementary School, Whittier Junior High School, and Flint Central High School, Davis played football at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (formerly Arkansas A&M University) where he earned his B.A. degree in business administration in 1954.

Snubbed by General Motors because of his race, Davis served in the United States Army from 1955 to 1957, tracking missiles at White Sands, New Mexico. Returning to college, Davis earned his M.Ed. degree from Wayne State University in Detroit, and then worked as a mathematics teacher at Duffield Elementary School and Jones Elementary School. One of the black salesmen Equitable Life Insurance hired in the wake of 1964's Detroit race riot, Davis became a district manager by his third year. Between 1971 and 1974, Davis earned every type of managerial award Equitable offered. Promoted to vice president of manpower development in 1974, Davis served as the company's first African American regional president in 1975. In 1989, Davis was promoted to senior vice president of Equitable Life Assurance Society and recognized by Black Enterprise magazine as one of the 25 most important African American executives. A mentor to many young African American executives, Davis retired as senior vice president of AXA Financial in 1998.

Davis served on the African American advisory board of Pepsi-Cola and the boards of the Albert Oliver Program, the Jackie Robinson Foundation, the Executive Leadership Foundation, the National Minority Golf Foundation, and the Jesse Owens Foundation. Davis also served as vice president of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding. Davis, a recipient of many awards and honorary degrees, had four grown children and lived with his wife, Velmarie, in Stamford, Connecticut.

Davis passed away on Sunday, April 16, 2006 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## Related Entries

**University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Flint Central High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**New Mexico State University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Detroit Public Schools** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1956 to 1966]

**Teacher**

**Equitable Life Assurance Society of America**  
[EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1966 to 1971]

**Salesman**

**Equitable Life Assurance Society of America**  
[EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1971 to 1974]

**District Manager**

**Equitable Life Assurance Society of America**  
[EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1975 to 1983]

**Vice President**

**Equitable Life Assurance Society of America**  
[EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1983 to 1998]

**Senior Vice President**

**PepsiCo** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Advisory Board Member**

**Albert G. Oliver Program** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**National Minority Golf Foundation** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Jackie Robinson Foundation** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Jesse Owens Foundation** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**President**

**Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]