

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable David S. Cunningham, Jr.

PERSON

Cunningham, David S., 1935-2017

**Alternative Names:** The Honorable David S. Cunningham, Jr.; David Surmier Cunningham, Jr.;

**Life Dates:** June 24, 1935-November 16, 2017

**Place of Birth:** Chicago, Illinois, USA

**Residence:** Los Angeles, CA

**Occupations:** City Council Member

## Biographical Note

California politician and consultant, David Surmier Cunningham, Jr., was born June 24, 1935, in Chicago, Illinois, to Eula Mae Lawson Cunningham and C.M.E. Rev. David S. Cunningham, Sr. At age eight, Cunningham accompanied his parents to Decatur, Illinois, where he attended E.A. Gastman Elementary School and enjoyed musical instruction at Millikin University. In 1952, Cunningham graduated from Sumner High School in St. Louis, Missouri, as a Danforth Award winner. Cunningham earned his A.A. degree in 1954 from Stowe Teachers College, while serving in the United States Naval Air Reserve. Joining the United States Air Force in 1954, Cunningham served as a cartographer, interacting with the U-2 until 1960. Cunningham attended the historic 1960 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, California, before enrolling at the University of California at Riverside. Cunningham graduated with a B.A. degree in economics and political science in 1962. In 1963, Cunningham, on a public affairs internship from the Coro Foundation, served as administrative aide to California assemblyman, Charles Warren. In 1973, Cunningham received his M.A. degree in urban studies from Occidental College.

In 1964, Cunningham, moved to Lagos, Nigeria where he became the West Africa regional manager for the DuKane Corporation. In 1967, Cunningham joined the Hughes Aircraft Company as manager of community relations; there, he co-managed the Hughes Active Citizenship Program. Cunningham then went on to found Cunningham, Short, Berryman & Associates in 1968, where he provided management consultation to government and small businesses.

In 1973, Cunningham took Mayor Tom Bradley's place on the Los Angeles City Council, representing the Tenth District. As a councilman, Cunningham authored legislation creating the Mayor's Office of Small Business Assistance. Cunningham also pioneered the use of government grants to restore public buildings; created a system of community senior citizens centers; and served as chairman of the Grants, Housing, and Community Development Committee. Cunningham served as state chairman of the California Delegation to the Democratic National Committee in 1976. In 1986, Cunningham joined Cranston/Prescott Investment Bankers as senior vice president of public finance. Cunningham served as senior vice president of Community Housing Equity Corporation from 1988 to 1991, while forming Dave Cunningham and Associates, a public affairs consultant firm. Cunningham serves on a number of boards and received both the Southern California Fair Housing and Alex Haley Heritage Awards in 1984.

Cunningham passed away on November 16, 2017 at age 82.

## Related Entries

**Charles H. Sumner High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**E.A. Gastman Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**University of California, Riverside** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Occidental College** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**East Side School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Cunningham, Short, Berryman and Associates** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Partner**

**Hughes Aircraft Corp.** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Dukane Corporation** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1964 to 1967]

**Sales Representative**

**Los Angeles City Council** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1973 to 1986]

**Council Member**

**David Cunningham and Associates** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1987 to ?]

## Partner