

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with William Davis

PERSON

Davis, William , 1926-

Alternative Names: Davis, William , 1926-;

Life Dates: August 22, 1926-

Place of Birth: Waycross , Georgia

Residence: San Antonio, TX

Occupations: Research Chemist; Chemistry Professor

Biographical Note

Research chemist and chemistry professor William C. Davis was born on August 22, 1926 in Waycross, Georgia to parents Kince and Laura Jane Cooper Davis. In 1944, Davis moved to New York City to join his brother, actor Ossie Davis, and completed college preparatory courses. After graduating from Dwight High School in 1945, Davis attended City College of New York and New York University before enrolling at Talladega College in Alabama. He then joined the U.S. Army Reserve Officer Training Corps and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during the Korean War. Returning to Talladega College, Davis earned his B.S. degree in chemistry in 1956. As the recipient of a Carver Fellowship, Davis went on to earn his M.S. degree in organic chemistry from Tuskegee Institute in 1958 and his Ph.D. degree in biochemistry from the University of Idaho-Moscow in 1965.

Upon graduation, Davis accepted a research position in the Division of Industrial Research at Washington State University where he was credited with discoveries leading to or improving numerous amenities, among them the potato chip, the instant mashed potato, soft serve ice cream, and STRactan, the organic glue that holds together wood-chip and particle board. He was then appointed Research Director of United Medical Laboratories in

Portland, Oregon where he helped pioneer advances in the laboratory assay of body fluids and tissue samples. After post-doctoral study with Rosalyn Yalow at the Bronx Veteran's Affairs Hospital, Davis field-tested her technique of radioimmunoassay on diabetes patients in Portland. From 1974 to 1976, Davis continued research as a visiting scientist at the George Hyman Research Institute in Washington, D.C. Between 1979 and 1982 Davis served as a research associate at the University of Texas Health Science Center. Davis was named full Professor of Chemistry at St. Philip's College in 1985. In addition, he served as Chair of the Natural Sciences Department and Director of Renewable Energy, which enabled him to develop a STEM-centered minority research program. When Davis retired in August 2009, he was named Professor Emeritus of Chemistry; and, in 2012 the science building at St. Philip's College was named in his honor. Davis's research has been published in academic journals such as, "Journal of Medical Technology" and "European Journal of Pharmacology".

Davis's professional and academic affiliations include the American Chemical Society, the Health Physicist Society, the Society of Nuclear Medicine, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He is a recipient of Tuskegee Institute's George Washington Carver Fellowship and the U.S. Army's Purple Heart Medal. He was inducted into the Texas Science Hall of Fame in 2000.

Davis and his wife, Ocia, live in San Antonio, Texas. They have two children: Mark Alan and Cheryl Elise.

William C. Davis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on January 30, and February 1, 2013.

Related Entries

Davis, Ocia [SPOUSEOF]

Wife

Davis, Charity [GRANDCHILDOF]

Paternal Grandmother

Davis, Raiford Chatman [GRANDCHILDOF]

Paternal Grandfather

Cooper, Viola "Coot" [GRANDCHILDOF]

Maternal Grandmother

Franklin, Jonas [GRANDCHILDOF]

Maternal Grandfather

Davis, Lela [SIBLINGOF]

Sibling

Davis, James Albert [SIBLINGOF]

Sibling

Davis, Kenneth Curtis [SIBLINGOF]

Sibling

Davis, Cheryl Elise [PARENTOF]

Child

Davis, Mark Alan [PARENTOF]

Child

Davis, Ossie [SIBLINGOF]

Sibling

Davis Morgan, Essie Mae [SIBLINGOF]

Sibling

Cooper Davis, Laura Jane [CHILDOF]

Mother

Davis, Kincaid Chapman [CHILDOF]

Father

Tuskegee Institute [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1965]

Ph.D.

Tuskegee Institute [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1958]

M.S.

Talladega College [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1956-06]

B.S.

City College of New York [STUDENTOF]

Freshman and Sophomore Years

Dwight High School, Manhattan [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1945]

Diploma

Dasher High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1944-06]

University of Washington [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1962 to 1964]

Chemistry Technician

United Medical Laboratories [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1964 to 1978]

Clinical Chemist

Warner Pacific College [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1967 to 1976]

Physical Science Instructor

College of Naturopathy [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1976 to 1980]

Academic Dean

University of Texas Health Science Center [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1979 to 1982]

Research Associate

Immutech, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1980 to 1982]

Laboratory Director

St. Phillips College [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1983 to 2009]

Professor Emeritus

Sigma Xi [MEMBEROF]
Life Member

American Chemical Society [MEMBEROF]
Member

Registry of American Medical Technologists [MEMBEROF]
Member

American Nuclear Society [MEMBEROF]
Member

Abundant Grace Lutheran Church [MEMBEROF]
Organist/Lay Pastor

