

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Johnny Shaw

PERSON

**Shaw, Johnny W., 1942-**

**Alternative Names:** Johnny Shaw;

**Life Dates:** January 5, 1942-

**Place of Birth:** Laconia, Tennessee, USA

**Residence:** Bolivar, TN

**Work:** Nashville, TN

**Occupations:** Radio Station Owner; State Representative

## Biographical Note

Radio station owner and state representative Johnny W. Shaw was born on January 5, 1942 in Laconia, Tennessee. He attended the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee, where he received a degree in theology.

In the 1960s, Shaw was the spokesman of a local

gospel group's Sunday morning radio program on WBOL-AM in Bolivar, Tennessee, where he was also the first African American staff announcer. He was later promoted to program director and assistant manager, and then as general manager of WBOL. In addition to his work at WBOL, Shaw served as a minister at Saint John Missionary Baptist Church in Stanton, Tennessee. He also sang with the musical group, the Shaw Singers, and worked as a psychologist.

In 1987, Shaw and his wife, Opal, founded the Shaw Broadcasting Company, LLC, where he served as chief executive officer. That same year, Shaw Broadcasting Company purchased WBOL. In the early 1990's, Shaw acquired the license permit to construct a 6000 watt FM station in Bolivar, which was then built and began broadcasting in 1992 as WOJG-FM.

In 1997, Shaw was appointed as a co-commissioner of Hardeman County in Tennessee, where he served for one-and-a-half terms. In 2000, he was elected to the Tennessee House of Representatives, representing District 80, where he became the first African American to serve in the state legislature in rural west Tennessee since reconstruction. Shaw won re-election in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012. While in public office, he served as house member of the 102nd through 108th General Assemblies; member of the House Finance, Ways and Means Committee; member of the House State Government Committee and Subcommittee; member of the Joint Pensions and Insurance Committee; and chair of the Tennessee Legislative Black Caucus.

Shaw is a lifetime member of the NAACP, and has served as a board member of the National Civil Rights Museum. He also served as board chair of the Western Mental Health Institute, and was a member of the West Tennessee River Basin Authority Board. In 2012, Shaw received the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters (TAB) Distinguished Service Award.

Shaw and his wife have six children. They reside in Bolivar, Tennessee.

Johnny Shaw was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 23, 2014.

## Related Entries

**Love Elementary** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Fayette Ware Comprehensive High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Allen White High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**American Baptist Theological Seminary** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**WBOL-AM** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Program Director and Assistant Manager**

**WBOL-AM** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**General Manager**

**Saint John Missionary Baptist Church** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Minister**

**WBOL-AM** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1960 to ?]

**Spokesman, Announcer**

**Shaw Broadcasting Company, LLC** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1987 to ?]

**Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer**

**Hardeman County, Tennessee** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1997 to 2000]

**Co-Commissioner**

**Tennessee House of Representatives** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2000 to ?]

**Representative**

**NAACP** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Lifetime Member**

**National Civil Rights Museum** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Board Member**

**Western Mental Health Institute** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Board Chair**

**West Tennessee River Basin Authority Board**

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**