

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Henry T. Brown

PERSON

Brown, Henry T., 1932-2020

Alternative Names: Henry T. Brown;

Life Dates: June 16, 1932-February 13, 2020

Place of Birth: Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Residence: Weston, MA

Occupations: Chemical Engineer

Biographical Note

Chemical engineer Henry T. Brown was born on June 16, 1932 to Elias Brown and Martha Gentry Marks in Cincinnati, Ohio. He graduated from Walnut Hills High School in 1950, and attended the University of Cincinnati, where he was the first African American to earn a B.S. degree in chemical engineering in 1955. Brown then attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a National Science Foundation Scholar, and received his M.S. degree in chemical engineering in 1956.

Brown became a research scientist at Esso Research and Engineering Company in New Jersey in 1956; and, from 1957 to 1965, he was active with the NAACP as an executive board member, membership chairman, advisor to the youth group, publicity chairman, and member of the labor committee. The labor committee originated the bias fight at the Union County Court House annex in 1963, which was the largest non-violent demonstrations in the state of New Jersey. In 1967, Brown moved to Metuchen, New Jersey to work as a development engineer for the Squibb Institute for Medical Research. He joined the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE) in 1968, where he helped develop a career guidance and minority affairs program. While a resident of Metuchen, Brown became the first African American in town government in 1970, serving as vice president of the education board in 1971 and 1972. In 1972, Brown left the board and Squibb when he accepted a managerial role at Polaroid. Residing in Weston, Massachusetts, Brown became the first African American town official in 1982 joining the town's board of health and was Chairman for seven years. In 1983, Brown became the first African American director of AIChE, and the minority affairs coordinator; and, in 1984, he became the second African American fellow. He retired from Polaroid in 1996, having last served as plant manager of the Integral Coatings Division, and stepped down as the AIChE minority affairs coordinator in 2003.

Brown has received an array of awards for his work, which include: the Martin K. Simberloff Memorial Award in 1960, presented by the Urban League of Union County, New Jersey; the Big Brother Award for Outstanding Service to Youth in 1965, the Distinguished Alumni Award , presented by the University of Cincinnati in 1983; the F.J. and Dorothy Van Antwerpen Award for Service to the Institute, presented by the AIChE in 1996; an honorary doctorate of science degree from the University of Cincinnati in 2001; and the 2004 Grimes and 2015 Pioneer of Diversity Awards, both presented by the AIChE's Minority Affairs Committee. In 2018, the AIChE renamed their Minority Affairs Committee Endowment Fund the Henry T. and Melinda C. Brown Minority Affairs Endowment Fund.

Brown was a Sunday school teacher at Myrtle Baptist Church in Newton, Massachusetts for thirty years, and a NAACP Diamond Life Member. He resides in Weston, Massachusetts, and has two adult children, Gregory and Mary Allyson, and two grandchildren, Ian and Camille.

Henry T. Brown was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 11, 2019.

Brown passed away on February 13, 2020.

Related Entries

Walnut Hills High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of Cincinnati [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.S.

Sands Montessori School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Esso Research & Engineering Co. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1975 to ?]

Research Scientist

E.R. Squibb for Medical Research [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1970 to 1974]

Development Engineer

Polaroid Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Manager

University of Cincinnati Foundation [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Trustee

Myrtle Baptist Church [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Sunday School Teacher

City of Weston, Massachusetts [MEMBEROF]
[from 1975 to ?]

Member, Board of Health

Al.Ch.E. Council [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Director

Board of Education [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Vice President

Al.Ch.E. [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Minority Affairs Coordinator

NAACP [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

NAACP [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Diamond Life Member