

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Mercer Cook

PERSON

Cook, Mercer, 1930-

Alternative Names: Mercer Cook;

Life Dates: May 31, 1930-January 4, 2018

Place of Birth: Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Occupations: State Deputy Attorney

Biographical Note

Mercer Cook, born May 31, 1930 in Washington, D.C., is an accomplished attorney in public and private practice with an interesting family story. His great grandfather John Hartwell Cook graduated from Oberlin College during the Civil War and was reportedly the first Dean of Howard University Law School. His grandfather, classically trained composer Will Marion (Mercer) Cook (1869-1945) collaborated on Broadway musicals with Paul Laurence Dunbar and Bert Williams. His father, (Will) Mercer Cook (1903-1987) was a noted scholar and translator from Howard University who served as United States Ambassador to Senegal and Nigeria.

Cook grew up in Atlanta, attending Oglethorpe Elementary School. He graduated from Dunbar High School in Washington D.C. in 1947. Cook earned a B.A. from Amherst College in 1951. He spent some time in Europe before returning to finish his J.D. from the University of Chicago in 1956. Cook's brother, Jacques is also an attorney. From 1957, he was in private practice. In 1967, he was hired by the Cook (Illinois) County Legal Assistance Foundation. In 1970, Cook switched to the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. He was Assistant State's Attorney from 1970 to 1989 and Deputy State's Attorney from 1989-1993. From 1993 to 1996 Cook worked for the legal firm Gordon and Pikarski. He has remained in private practice since 1996.

Cook has three children: Antoinette, a lawyer, Mercer, a managing director of Citigroup, and Janice, senior vice president of New York City Investment Fund. Cook and his wife, Edwina, live in Chicago.

Cook passed away on January 4, 2018.

Related Entries

Paul Laurence Dunbar High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Amherst College [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Oglethorpe Elementary School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

University of Chicago [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1967 to 1970]

Cook County States Attorney's Office [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1993 to 1996]

Assistant State's Attorney

Cook County States Attorney's Office [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1989 to 1993]

Deputy State's Attorney

Gordon & Pikarski [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1993 to 1996]

Attorney