

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Foster

PERSON

Foster, Robert, 1950-

Alternative Names: Robert Foster;

Life Dates: March 27, 1950-

Place of Birth: Cashville, South Carolina, USA

Residence: Falls Church, VA

Work: Washington, D.C.

Occupations: Federal Government Administrator

Biographical Note

Robert Lee Foster has been a fixture on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. for thirty-seven years as a professional staffer to the United States Senate Commerce Committee. Starting in government service in 1969, he has been on “The Hill” through the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, Gerald Ford, Jimmie Carter, Richard Nixon, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

Foster was born on March 27, 1950 in Cashville, South Carolina. Both parents, Rusher Allen Foster and Bernice (Greene) Foster were sharecroppers as were his maternal and paternal grandparents. As a youngster, Foster worked in the fields helping his family, including nine siblings. Before leaving Cashville at age twenty, Foster completed Woodruff High School and attended Greenville Business College. In September of 1969, he left Cashville and headed to Washington, D.C. with a cousin, Willie James Greene, who was driving back after a visit with family.

Within a week of being in Washington, D.C., Foster obtained a position as a file clerk and messenger boy in the office of the Senate Commerce Committee. He held this position for approximately twelve years before being promoted to the position of Public Information Officer for the Commerce Committee. From this position, he moved on to become the lead professional staffer, a position he has held for over twenty years. In 1980, he earned a certificate from the United States Department of Agriculture which gave him background and skills in landscaping, one of his major avocations.

Foster’s work has brought him in close contact with Nelson Mandela, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the late and former

Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown and hundreds of U.S. Senators including Senators Warren Magnuson and Ted Kennedy. From 1976 to 1996, Foster served as the Commissioner of the U.S. Senate Softball League; from 1980 to 1988, as Sergeant-at-Arms, Vice-President, and President of the U.S. Senate Staff Club. Between 2005 and 2006, he served as Chairman of the Black Representatives Golf Association.

Foster is married to Nancy (Carter) Foster, Senior Adviser for Health Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. They reside in Falls Church, Virginia.

Foster was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 8, 2006.

Related Entries

Woodruff High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Greenville Business College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1970 to ?]

Professional Staff

Freemasons [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

3rd Degree Mason

U.S. Senate Softball League [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Commissioner