

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ronald Mickens

PERSON

Mickens, Ronald E., 1943-

Alternative Names: Ronald Mickens; Ronald E. Mickens

Life Dates: February 7, 1943-

Place of Birth: Petersburg, Virginia, USA

Residence: Atlanta, Georgia

Work: Atlanta, Georgia

Occupations: Physicist; ;

Biographical Note

Physics professor and research physicist Ronald Mickens was born in Petersburg, Virginia on February 7, 1943 to Daisy Brown Mickens and Joseph Mickens. Mickens spent much of his youth with his maternal grandparents, and his grandfather, James Williamson, was responsible for introducing him to science. By the time Mickens was eight years old, he knew he wanted to become a scientist. Mickens attended Peabody High School in Petersburg where he took algebra, plane and solid geometry, chemistry, biology, and physics. Because he took courses during the summer, Mickens graduated early at the age of seventeen.

After high school, Mickens entered Fisk University with a full scholarship where he studied chemistry, mathematics and physics. He graduated in 1964 with his B.A. degree in physics and one of the highest academic averages in the history of the school. Mickens immediately enrolled in a graduate program at Vanderbilt University where, in 1968, he received his Ph.D. in theoretical physics. By that time he had been elected to the honor societies of Sigma Chi and Phi Beta Kappa. Additionally, Mickens won a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, a Dansworth Fellowship, and a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship, which allowed him to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Beginning in 1968, Mickens spent two years conducting research in elementary particle physics at the MIT Center for Theoretical Physics. In 1970, Mickens returned to Fisk University where he accepted a teaching position in the physics department. During that time, he spent brief stints conducting research at other institutions including Vanderbilt University and the Joint Institute for Laboratory Astrophysics in Boulder, Colorado. In 1982, Mickens became a professor at Clark Atlanta University and was named a Callaway professor of

physics in 1985. In 1987, he published a book on chaos theory entitled, *Difference Equations* .

Mickens has conducted research in the areas of complex functions, theoretical elementary particle physics, mathematical epidemiology and modeling of non-linear oscillations. He has authored five advanced mathematics textbooks in addition to his contributions to over 120 scientific research papers. In 1990, Mickens produced an edited volume entitled, *Mathematics and Science* . Mickens' research in the area of African Americans in science allowed him to write, *The African American Presence in Physics* and *Edward Bouchet: The First African American Doctorate* as well as biographies of several African American women scientists. Mickens and his wife Maria, had two children, Lea Mickens and James Williamson Mickens.

Ronald Mickens was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on December 11, 2006.

Related Entries

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

Fisk University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A. degree in physics

Vanderbilt University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Ph.D. in theoretical physics

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

Fisk University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1970 to ?]

Professor

Clark Atlanta University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1982 to ?]

Calloway Professor of Physics