

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Coy Payne

PERSON

Payne, Coy, 1929-

Alternative Names: The Honorable Coy Payne;

Life Dates: May 22, 1929-December 8, 2019

Place of Birth: Sulphur Springs, Texas, USA

Residence: Chandler, AZ

Occupations: Mayor

Biographical Note

Mayor Coy C. Payne was born May 22, 1929 in Sulphur Springs, Texas to Scott Payne and Virgie May Stribling, cotton sharecroppers. The second of nine children, Payne often labored with his family in the fields throughout his childhood and adolescence. When he was twelve, Payne's family moved to Chandler, where Payne attended a segregated middle school in Mesa and Chandler before attending segregated Carver High School in Phoenix, an hour long bus ride away. After dropping out of Arizona State University in 1949, Payne was drafted by the United State Army and served in Korea. After he returned, he met and married Willie Woods, a community activist and certified accountant. Returning to school on the G.I. Bill, he received his B. S. degree in education from Arizona State University in 1958.

Payne started his career by teaching third grade in Chandler. He would go on to work in Chandler area schools for thirty-one years, teaching and serving as Assistant Principal of Chandler Junior High School until he retired from education in 1989. Out of college, Payne became active in the community by joining the Chandler Human Relations Committee and working to improve race relations in the area. From there, he was appointed to various other city organizations, including the chairmanship of the Chandler Housing Authority. In 1980, at the advice of the Mayor of Chandler, Payne ran for and won an at large seat on the Chandler City Council, serving two terms from 1982 to 1989. In 1990, Payne won a landslide victory in the mayoral election, becoming the first African American to serve as mayor in the State of Arizona.

Payne served two terms as Mayor of Chandler, from 1990 to 1994, and successfully oversaw the huge economic and population boom that occurred across the "Sun Belt." He and his wife continue to be involved in community government and service. A middle school was named in their honor.

Payne passed away on December 8, 2019.

The Honorable Coy Payne was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 11, 2007.

Related Entries

George Washington Carver High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

H.S.

Ocotillo Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Washington Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Arizona State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Chandler City Council [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

United States Army [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1950 to 1951]

City of Chandler [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1990 to 1994]

Mayor