

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Col. James Stith

PERSON

Stith, James, 1941-

Alternative Names: Col. James Stith;

Life Dates: July 17, 1941-

Place of Birth: Alberta, Virginia, USA

Residence: Mitchellville, MD

Occupations: Physicist; ;

Biographical Note

Physicist and Retired U.S. Army Colonel James Stith was born on July 17, 1941, to Ruth Stith in Brunswick County, Virginia. Stith had three step-sisters—Wilma, Aldrena, and Joyce—and one half-sister, Juanita. Stith attended Oak Grove Elementary School and he graduated from James Solomon Russell High School in 1959. It was in high school that Stith decided he wanted to pursue a career in physics.

Stith went on to graduate from Virginia State College to earn his B.S. and M.S. degrees, both in physics, in the years 1963 and 1965, respectively. During his time at Virginia State College, Stith joined the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, and worked as an instructor. In 1965, he was called to active duty in the U.S. Army for two years. Then, after a two-year term working with the Radio Corporation of America, Stith continued his education at Pennsylvania State University, where he earned his D.Ed. degree in physics in 1972. Following his graduation, Stith was recalled to active duty, and so he joined the faculty at the United States Military Academy at West Point. In 1976, Stith became the first tenured African American professor at the United States Military Academy, where he continued to work until he retired from his post in 1993. Stith retired from the United States Military Academy as a full professor of physics and from the military at the grade of Colonel. Stith then worked as a full professor of physics at Ohio State University until 1998. Following his time at Ohio State University, Stith was hired as the vice president of the Physics Resource Center of the American Institute of Physics, a position he would hold for ten years. Stith also served on the board of the Triangle Coalition from 1999 to 2006, and he joined the advisory board for Project Kaleidoscope in 1990. Additionally, Stith has served on several advisory committees of the National Research Council throughout his career.

Stith has played an important role in increasing the role of African Americans in the

physical sciences and has been recognized by the Academy for his work. In 1990, he was elected Vice President of the American Association of Physics Teachers, and in 2004 he was recognized as one of the “50 Most Important Blacks in Research Science.”

Stith is married to Alberta Hill, and they have three adult daughters: Adrienne Yvette, Andrea Lynn, and Alyssa Joy.

James Stith was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 14, 2010.

Related Entries

Oak Grove Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

James Solomon Russell Middle School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Diploma

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

B.S. in physics

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

M.S. in physics

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

D.Ed. in physics

Ohio State University, Department of Physics [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1993 to 1998]

Professor

United States Military Academy [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1972 to 1993]

Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Instructor

Radio Corporation of America [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1967 to 1969]

Associate Engineer

University of Maryland, Far East Division [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1965 to 1966]

Instructor

United States Army [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1965 to 1993]

Officer

Radio Corporation of America [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

American Institute of Physics [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1998 to 2008]

Vice President

American Institute of Physics [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Executive Committee Member

Council of Scientific Society Pres. [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Treasurer

Triangle Coalition [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Secretary

Project Kaleidoscope [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

[MEMBEROf]
[from 1991 to 1994]

Executive Committee

[MEMBEROf]
[from 1991 to 1996]

Treasurer/Executive Committee

[MEMBEROf]
[from 1999 to 2006]

Secretary/Treasurer

[MEMBEROf]
[from 2008 to ?]

Board Member