

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Barbara Bowles

PERSON

Bowles, Barbara, 1947-

Alternative Names: Barbara Bowles;

Life Dates: September 17, 1947-

Place of Birth: Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Residence: Chicago, Illinois

Occupations: Investment Manager

Biographical Note

Financier Barbara Bowles was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on September 17, 1947. Growing up in racially segregated Nashville, Bowles was an excellent student. She received her B.A. in mathematics with honors from Fisk University in 1968 and then accepted an offer from First National Bank of Chicago to fund her M.B.A. in finance, which she earned in 1971 from the University of Chicago, while working as a management trainee. She was the first African American in the program. Bowles spent over a decade in the investment management area of First National Bank (now Bank One) after she graduated, becoming the first African American woman there promoted to vice president. Bowles moved on to head the investor relations departments at Beatrice Companies, Inc. from 1981 to 1984 and Kraft, Inc. from 1984 to 1989.

In 1989, Bowles became the first African American female equity manager in Chicago when she established the Kenwood Group, Inc. It took six months to win her firm's first client, Quaker Oats. Since then, the Kenwood Group has attracted many other high profile clients, including: Abbott Laboratories, the Field Museum and the Chicago Transit Authority. Bowles' firm manages pension, endowment and public funds, is 100 percent minority-owned and manages assets of nearly \$500 million. In 1996, Bowles became the first African American woman to launch a mutual fund with the debut of the Kenwood Growth and Income Fund. Her company has been featured in Crain's Chicago Business, Black Enterprise and various other media.

Bowles serves on the board of directors at Black & Decker Corporation; Georgia-Pacific Corporation; Wisconsin Energy Corporation; Hyde Park Bank and Trust Company of Chicago; the Chicago Urban League; Children's Memorial Hospital and Fisk University.

She is married to Earl Bowles and has one son.

Related Entries

First National Bank [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1988 to 2003]

Vice President

Beatrice Companies, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1981 to 1984]

Head of Investor Relations

Kraft, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 199108 to 201008]

Kenwood Group [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1989 to ?]

Founder