

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Cordell Reed

PERSON

Reed, Cordell, 1938-

**Alternative Names:** Cordell Reed;

**Life Dates:** March 26, 1938-December 4, 2017

**Place of Birth:** Chicago, Illinois, USA

**Residence:** Chicago, IL

**Occupations:** Energy Executive

## Biographical Note

Energy expert Cordell Reed was born on March 26, 1938 in Chicago, Illinois to Carrie Bell and Clewon Reed. He grew up in a south side housing project and moved on to a remarkable career in Chicago's corporate and civic communities.

Earning a B.S. in mechanical engineering from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 1960, Reed became the third African American with that degree from UIUC. He went to work for Illinois electric company Commonwealth Edison (ComEd). He worked his way up through the ranks and became an executive in 1975, acting as a public spokesman for nuclear power as well as a department manager. Reed was promoted to senior vice president, serving in three separate departments. In 1994, he became ComEd's ethics officer and the chief diversity officer in addition to maintaining responsibility for purchasing materials for the corporation's 10 fossil fuel-fired energy-generating plants. Reed represented ComEd in a 1995 trade mission to South Africa before retiring in 1997.

The Black Engineer of the Year Awards honored Reed with a "Lifetime Achievement" award in 1988 and the American Nuclear Society bestowed the Tommy Thompson Award on him in 1993. He has also been active in corporate America, serving on the board of directors for LaSalle Bank, the Walgreen Company, Underwriters Laboratories and Washington Group International. He is a member of the National Academy of Engineering, engineering honor society Tau Beta Pi, the National Technical Association and the Urban Financial Service Association as well as a fellow of the American Nuclear Society. Other civic organizations that have benefited from his leadership include the John G. Shedd Aquarium, the Illinois Academic Decathlon Association, Cal-Met Village Senior Citizen Housing, the Development Fund for Black Students and the Metropolitan Family Services Advisory Board. Reed and his wife

Bernice have five adult children: Derrick, Brian, Steven, Michael and Barry.

Reed passed away on December 4, 2017.

## Related Entries

**University of Illinois at Chicago** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**B.S.**

**ComEd** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1967 to 1971]

**Technical Engineer**

**ComEd** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1971 to 1975]

**Project Engineer, Dresden Nuclear Power Plant**

**Com Ed** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1975 to 1977]

**Head of Nuclear Department, LaSalle Station**

**ComEd** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1977 to 1979]

**Assistant Vice President**

**ComEd** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1979 to 1997]

**Senior Vice President & Chief Nuclear Officer**

**ComEd** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2004 to 2007]

**Chief Diversity Officer**