

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Sanford T. Roach

PERSON

Roach, Sanford T., 1916-2010

Alternative Names: Sanford T. Roach;

Life Dates: February 26, 1916-September 2, 2010

Place of Birth: Frankfort, Kentucky, USA

Residence: Lexington, KY

Occupations: High School Basketball Coach; ;

Biographical Note

Educator and basketball coach, Sanford T. Roach, was born in Frankfort, Kentucky. Roach graduated from Danville Bate High School in 1933 in Danville, Kentucky, where he was a basketball and football star and salutatorian of his class. In 1937, Roach earned his B.S. degree in natural sciences from Kentucky State University, where he was the captain of the basketball team, a track and field star, editor of the student newspaper, and a student council member. In 1955, Roach earned his M.A. degree in education from the University of Kentucky.

After graduating from college, Roach returned to his old high school to teach and coach basketball. Over the course of three years, Roach's coaching record was 98-24; in 1941 he gained notoriety for benching his five starting players the day of the district tournament for disobeying his curfew rule. Roach's strict sense of discipline on the court caught the attention of the principal of Lexington's Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, and he was soon hired as teacher and coach. Roach taught biology, physiology, and anatomy classes; by 1943 he had become head basketball coach. In his twenty-two years as head coach, Roach led Dunbar High to a 512-142 record.

In 1965, Roach's first wife, Mary, herself a basketball enthusiast, died unexpectedly. Shortly after, Roach retired from coaching. Between 1965 and 1966, Roach served as principal of George W. Carver Elementary School, becoming the first black principal of an integrated elementary school in Lexington. Between 1966 and 1975, Roach worked as an administrator at Lexington Junior High, and became the first black principal of a Fayette County secondary school. From 1975 to 1988, Roach worked as a minority recruiter and principal assistant for the state secretary of transportation, and from 1989 to 1995 he worked for Mayors Scotty Baseler and Pam Miller.

Roach received numerous awards and honors for his educational and coaching career. In 1974, Roach became the first African American board member of the University of Kentucky Athletic Association; in 1991, the new Paul Laurence Dunbar High School dedicated its S.T. Roach Sports Center in his honor. Roach was featured in the National High School Sports Hall of Fame; the Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame; and the Kentucky State University Athletic Hall of Fame.

Roach passed away on September 2, 2010 at the age of 94.

Roach married Lettie in 1967, and had two children: Sandra Cole and Tom Roach.

Related Entries

Bate High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

diploma

Kentucky State University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

B.S. in natural sciences

University of Kentucky [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

M.A. in education

Danville Bate High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Bate High School [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1938 to 1941]

Teacher and Coach

Paul Laurence Dunbar High School [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1941 to 1965]

Teacher and Coach

George W. Carver Elementary School [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1965 to 1966]

Principal

Lexington Junior High School [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1966 to 1975]

Assistant Principal and Principal