

The GMAR Celebrates Black History Month by Remembering Edward “Ed” Smyth

By Scott Bush

I was honored when asked by Ed’s family to speak at his memorial service in 2014. While anxiously awaiting my turn to speak to the packed house at Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist Church, I listened intently to the other speakers. The common theme in all the speeches was recognition of Ed’s reputation as a gentleman, his kindness, and devotion to his work as a REALTOR®. Ed took great pride in being a REALTOR® and joined the Association in 1965.

Ed helped people of all backgrounds remove the racially entrenched barriers so they could realize the American Dream of homeownership--especially for many in the African American community. During the 1960’s, he worked on many open housing efforts. Ed coordinated two busloads of people to the march on Washington drawing America’s attention to continuing challenges and inequalities faced by African Americans. It was also the occasion of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s iconic “I Have A Dream” speech. Ed and his family also marched alongside of Father Groppi for open housing rights. Early in his career, Ed experienced many episodes of discrimination against himself and his clients. However, he was undeterred and remained resolute in his beliefs in fair housing and getting the job done. Ed loved being a REALTOR®. In his last days, while in the hospital, he still maintained contact with his clients and customers, not wanting to let them down.

Ed believed in giving back to his industry and served as the Association’s first African American President in 1979. Ed was also the former President of The Milwaukee chapter of the NAACP. In 2010, the GMAR honored Ed with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

REALTORS® who knew Ed, said that he was the consummate professional and a pleasure to do a deal with. With ongoing reports of discourtesies and disrespectful behavior in today’s marketplace, I think we can all take a lesson from the dignified way in which Ed Smyth conducted his business.