

Kenneth Wilder, retired Senior Labor Relations Specialist, New York State United Teachers, AFL-CIO. A loving and devoted husband, father and grandfather, brother, uncle, friend and associate who was generous to the core. A great humanitarian, gifted organizer, provider and protector. Salt of the earth. To God be the glory.

Born to Joseph Alexander and Addie Ashe Wilder in Raleigh, North Carolina, Ken was one of seven boys. After his birth, his parents returned to their home in New Rochelle, New York, where Ken was raised. He graduated from Albert Leonard High School in 1949. Long before his graduation, Ken's skills at negotiating, mediating and organizing were recognized. His efforts to organize the paper carriers in area at age 11 were an oft repeated story.

With a solid high school education and extraordinary intellect, Ken as an adult studied at Harvard Law School, Cornell University, Shaw University, and Empire State College. He earned several certificates in labor studies and was invited to teach and lecture in many places, including Adelphi University, Cornell University, Southern Michigan University, and in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Ken was honorably discharged from the US Army in 1955. Early employment included the US Postal Service and the New York City Parks Department. From 1960 to 1966 he was field representative and staff director in NYC of District Council 37, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO. From 1967 to 1996 he worked for NYSUT. His specialty was arbitration, mediation, legal education, and welfare fund disputes. On retirement, the Yonkers Federation of Teachers named him a *Friend of Education*, noting that his work had been "characterized by many special personal qualities and characteristics: a self effacing sense of humor, a laser-like intelligence, a true commitment to the highest ideals of the teaching profession, and the ability to reach deep into people and find the good that can transform them."

In 1982 Ken married Cora White Sarjeant and moved to Rockland County. Sharing many common interests, they established Cellar Gallery, a venue to promote the work of Black and Third-World artists. Through exhibitions, juried shows, and other presentations throughout the greater New York and New Jersey area, they promoted the careers of many artists. Ken's expertise and knowledge of African and African American art and history was well known, respected, and sought after. Ken and Cora also named, and were the first co-editors, of "Crossroads," the newsletter of the Nyack Branch of the NAACP.

Among his many achievements Ken was recognized in 1990 for participation in the Community dispute Resolution Program. In 1987 he was the only non-attorney participating in a Harvard Law School Program of Instruction for Lawyers. In 1981 the NAACP honored him with an Outstanding Leadership Award. In 1980 he received a fellowship from the national Endowment for the Humanities and was privileged to study with the renowned labor Historian, Herb Gutman. Ken was a candidate for the New York State Assembly, 4th AD, Bronx, NY in 1962.

Ken held memberships in ACLU, Southern Poverty Law Center, Amnesty International, Friends of the Nyacks, Friends of Nyack Public Library, the National Notary Association, and the Nyack Branch, NAACP (Life member). For several years he served on the South Nyack Board of Appeals and as a Deputy Sheriff/Consultant for the Rockland County Sheriff's Department. He served on the board of the African-American Historical society of Rockland County; he was appointed by the legislature to the Advisory council on the Aging and was a member of the Orangetown Senior Coordinating committee. The two groups he was especially passionate about were Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and the Orangetown-Nyack Senior club. He was elected Chaplain for the former and served multiple terms as the President of the latter. He provided leadership in an open and sharing manner. He was a beloved member.

In the spring of 1995 Ken became a member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity through Beta Alpha Alpha chapter in Westchester, NY. Bro. Wilder had a great love for Omega and demonstrated it by becoming a life member. In 2004 Ken left the Westchester chapter to become a member of the relatively new chapter in Rockland County – Xi Lambda Lambda. This move also meant that he would be able to make a contribution to the community that he lived in. Ken's love for children was reflected when he wrote a detailed program guideline that would move the chapter's mentoring program (Rockland Omega Academy - ROAD) to the next level. The program he wrote incorporated a lot of his vision on how we can help our youths. The ROAD program is still using many of the ideas and concepts that Bro. Wilder put into action. Although Bro. Wilder never got to participate in the program due to his long illnesses and hospital stays his legacy lives on through the young men that are a part of ROAD. The highest honor that a chapter can acknowledge a member with is the Omega Man of the Year award. In 2009 this award was bestowed upon Bro. Kenneth Wilder.

Ken loved to travel and he was partial to cruises. Together with Cora and friends and family, he shared more than 27 cruises over the past 30 years. He also found great joy in family reunions and trips abroad. His scheduled trip to Egypt was cancelled in February 2008 due to illness.

To cherish his memory, Ken leaves a loving wife, Cora, daughters Sharon Wilder Kornegay (Robert) of Goldsboro, NC; Michelle Worthy (Earl),; Maxine Sarjeant; and Marlene Sarjeant of Silver Spring, MD; and Marilyn Sarjeant of Brooklyn, NY; and brothers, Dr. Joseph A. Wilder of Richmond, VA; Leotha Wilder of Bronx, NY; Cleotha Wilder of NYC; and Carroll Wilder of charlotte, NC. He leaves also six grandchildren, Robert Kornegay, Jr. of Goldboro, NC, Rachel Worthy, Aziza Clunie, Jasmine Sarjeant, Laura Worthy, and Aliya Clunie. Finally, he leaves a host of other relatives and friends and a legacy of love and generosity.