



*"From Where I Sit ..."*

## **General Officer Receives NAACP "Diamond Life" Award**

In the South where I was reared, there was a country saying, "It's a poor dog ... that won't wag ... its own tail!" Needless to say that on Sunday, September 20, 2015, I was quite pleased when Dr. Warner L. Dickerson, Vice President of the NAACP Tennessee State Conference of NAACP Chapters, presented to me the NAACP "Diamond Life" award which is the NAACP's highest individual membership award. The award was presented at the Greenwood CME Church in Memphis, TN where my wife, Janice, is an active member and where I serve as a part of the ministerial team and a frequent Sunday School Teacher of the Men's Bible Class.

This award is the culmination of a long journey from an annual (\$30/year) member of the NAACP through the steps of Silver Life membership,



Gold Life membership and finally Diamond Life membership. The journey

has been long for several reasons. First, as a young man some 40 years ago, I had the distinct honor of being elected to serve as the President of the Lexington-Fayette County Branch in Lexington, KY and the Treasurer of the Kentucky State Conference of NAACP Chapters. Since those early days, I have sought to support the NAACP wherever I have been assigned to serve in Missouri, Wisconsin, Washington, DC and now Memphis, TN. Second, I have always been impressed with the service of retired Bishop William H. Graves, Sr. on the

Executive Committee of the National Board of the NAACP as he and others before him represented the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Third, after attaining my Silver Life membership in 2003 and recognizing the influence of Bishop Graves as a leader in the NAACP in conjunction with the annual support of the NAACP by the Board of Personnel Services, I decided to suspend my steps to higher membership award levels and to instead work to insure that every active Bishop of the CME Church (who had not previously attained this level) would be gifted a fully paid Silver Life membership in the order of their seniority. And in so doing, this accomplishment would also strengthen the representative voice of Bishop Graves as a CME at the National level.

As of 2014, this overall goal has since been accomplished along with the occasional opportunity for me to take the steps necessary to attain both Gold Life and now Diamond Life memberships. In September 2015, during the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual CME Unity Summit in Orlando, another Silver Life membership was gifted to Bishop Bobby R. Best as the senior member of the class of Bishops elected in 2014. The remaining two members of that class will receive Silver Life memberships in 2016 and 2017 respectively and again all of the active Bishops (and now most of the retired Bishops) will be fully paid life members.

However there was a fourth reason and that reason was my commitment to support Dr. Warner Dickerson, who is also a member of the Greenwood CME Church,

who was formerly President of the Memphis Branch and under his leadership, led the branch to regularly have the largest membership in the United States. His support of my efforts along with the support of the Greenwood CME Church is the reason I was so pleased to receive this recognition in the presence of my wife and Pastor Bethel L. Harris who also serves as the Chair of the Social Justice committee of the CME Ministers Alliance of Greater Memphis.

Yes, it's true that "it's a poor dog that won't wag its own tail" but in reality, this article is not so much about me but about what we can all do to support those social agencies who not only have worked to advance the cause of people of color but have also been those agencies that we most often turned to when we have found ourselves abused or mistreated. We are here today because of the efforts of others and in many small ways, we can do a great deal to help pave the way for others who are yet coming behind us and will need our support ...Or at least that's the way it looks to me ...

*"From Where I Sit"*

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