



## Abraham S Venable

February 21, 2013

### The Passing Of A Minority Business Pioneer

Abraham S. Venable, 82, passed away on Thursday, February 21, 2013 in St. Paul, MN. He was called by many “one of the pioneers of corporate America and General Motors’ minority business programs.” GM formed an Urban Affairs Department to provide leadership and counsel in addressing the concerns of minorities in corporate programs. He retired from GM in 1990 as Executive Director of Urban Affairs, a position he had held since it was formed in 1971. During his tenure, Mr. Venable dedicated himself to improving the position of minorities in all facets of GM’s operations, from employment opportunities to minority suppliers and dealers. He also encouraged the corporation to “more effectively address social and economic issues affecting minorities,” said Rodney Coleman, Venable’s successor.

Born in Washington, DC, he was graduated from Howard University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics in 1951 and a Master of Arts degree in Economics in 1953. From 1968-69, he was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow in the School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. In 1983, he was selected by GM to participate in the Senior Executive Program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). This program included 50 executives from 20 countries.

In September 1963, Venable joined the US Department of Commerce and served in a number of assignments, including Conciliation Specialist with the Community Relations Service, Director of the Affirmative Action Program Staff and Director of the Office of Minority Business Enterprise. In 1972, he traveled throughout Germany as a representative of the US Department of Defense in an effort to improve race relations at US military installations in that country. He was also a member of the 1973 Presidential Goodwill Mission which visited Ethiopia, Kenya, The Cameroons, Nigeria, and Liberia in an attempt to promote increased trade with America. In 1976, he visited the Republic of South Africa to attend a conference sponsored by the US South African Leadership Exchange Program and to visit GM facilities in Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg.

Venable is the author of several articles dealing with Black businessmen and a book, *Building Black Business - An Analysis and a Plan*. He assigned all rights and proceeds from the sale of the book to the Howard University School of Business and Public Administration to establish a scholarship fund in his name.

Venable is the recipient of numerous awards and honors. In May 1990, the Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America presented him with its OIC Humanitarian Award "for demonstrating an ability to transcend the interests of the self by improving the lot of humanity." He also received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Howard University and the Congressional Black Caucus Chairman's Award. Other awards included the NAACP Executive Director's Award for outstanding and unselfish service to the NAACP; the Donald H. McGannon Citation from the National Urban League for outstanding achievements in business leadership, minority affairs, and community service; the Distinguished Corporate Urban Affairs Award for outstanding service to the National Urban Coalition, and in February 1990, the Howard University Small Business Development Center presented him with its outstanding

Minority Business Advocacy Award.

In 1973, Shaw College of Detroit honored him with an honorary doctorate of humane letters degree for his achievements in business leadership and minority affairs. In 1978, Venable received an honorary doctorate of laws degree from the Grand Valley State College for his outstanding community service. In 1981, he was inducted as an honorary member of Beta Gamma Sigma, a business fraternity at Howard University.

Venable has served as a member of the board of directors of the Special Contributions Fund Committee of the NAACP. Additionally, he served as chairman of the Business Policy Review Council, the Detroit-Wayne County Port Authority under Henry Ford II, and Chairman of the Greater Detroit Foreign Trade Zone. He also served as vice president of GM's Minority Enterprise Small Business Investment Company and the New Center Development Partnership. Venable was appointed a member of Parren J. Mitchell's Black Business and International Affairs Library Sponsorship Committee, and has also served on the Board of the Patriots Foundation. Venable also served as Chairman of the Institute for American Business, a non-profit organization which he founded. IAB was primarily tasked with developing non-traditional business opportunities for minorities, with offices in Detroit and Washington, DC.

Mr. Venable was preceded in death by his parents, Abraham and Mattie Venable, and his sister, Gladys Patterson. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Dr. Anna G. Venable; his daughter, Karen Venable of Durham, NC; his sons, Douglas Venable of Nashville, TN and Stephen Venable of St. Paul, MN; one grandson, Ryan Venable; former daughter-in-law, Sheila Venable; three nieces, Beverly Durham (Smitty), Denise Patterson and Gail Day (Larry).

Friends may visit with the family from 10:00 AM until time of service at 11:00 AM at the Howard University Chapel on Monday, March 4, 2013. Burial will immediately follow, with a repass after burial at the Howard University Blackburn Center.

# Cemetery Details

## Rock Creek Cemetery

Rock Creek Church Rd

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAR 4. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Andrew Rankin Chapel  
2455 6th St. NW  
Washington, DC 20059

## Service

MAR 4. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Andrew Rankin Chapel  
2455 6th St. NW  
Washington, DC 20059

# Tribute Wall



“ *Abraham S Venable*

---

October 23, 2023 at 08:15 AM



“ *We express love ,respect and favor to the memory of a great man,Abraham Venable. God bless him for God has blessed us with him. My last conversation with Abe was several months ago when I called him in the nursing home in Minnesota.We had a long coneveration about him,his family and the music. He was a great supporter of our Friday Night Jazz program and I would always get great information and advice from him. His manner and wisdom will always be embedded in my heart , and we are certainly in a better place because of Abe. From his Friday Night Jazz family, we say,big fellow, play on,play on,play on, and God bless you.*

---

**Dick Smith,Friday Night jazz coordinator** - March 04, 2013 at 12:02 PM

HF

“ Dear Ann and Family,

*On behalf of the Herman Flora family, we extend to you our heart felt sympathy for the death of your love one and my friend Abraham Venable. I belong to an organization, Omega Phi Psi, whose motto is “Friendship Is Essential To The Soul” Abe was my friend! I knew Abe casually at Howard and met him several times at professor Nathan Fitzhugh’s office, our Marketing Instructor. I was a returning veteran and was very happy to meet seriously minded students. I learned from Professor Fitzhugh that Abe was a very serious student and a very good person to know professionally.*

*Our friendship really bonded in the sixties (1960s) when Abe organized a Travel and Public Relations business and asked me to be its General Manager. Of course, we never made any money because Abe was also working for a beer company and I was working nights at the Post Office. Through the years, we conversed about various businesses opportunities, including real estate where I had opened a Real Estate Office. We purchased several pieces of property where we just broke even.*

*In later years, Abe became Director of the Office of Minority Business Agency (OMBE) within the Department of Commerce. He asked if I would work for him? I agreed to one of my most rewarding experiences, “helping minority business persons around the country to enter business or expand their businesses”. I became specifically responsible developing businesses for eight Southern states, where I established business acumen, pride, and lasting friendships.*

*Abe left Commerce to head the General Motors Minority Business Program. Of course, when he was in town, he never failed to call and ask about my Real Estate Business, or to discuss some other business interest.*

*I know you will miss Abe, but I also want you to know that his friends will miss him, too! May God continue to bless your family.*

*Sincerely,*

*Herman, Kitty, and family.*

---

**Herman Flora** - March 03, 2013 at 02:16 PM

JJ

“ *Condolences to The Widow and Family of Abraham S. Venable. I am deeply saddened to learn of your loss and, personally, I mourn the loss of an old friend and classmate. While we had not been in touch for many years, I remember Venable as a quality gentleman of talent, integrity and decency. We graduated together from Dunbar High School here in Washington, D.C., in 1947; and we were also schoolmates at Howard University. In both high school and college I always thought of Abe Venable as a classy musician, among other notable qualities. While I have not had the privilege of meeting his children and descendants I am honored and blessed with a strong recollection of his lovely and graceful wife who complemented this gentleman and his persona of dedication and dignity. I understand that mere words cannot assuage your pain and grief, I wish they could - but maybe these few expressions will lend some comfort for you to know that Abraham Sylvester Venable is known and revered by his contemporaries as a man of temperance, accomplishment, and integrity. Just knowing Abe was an enrichment.*

*May God grant you peace and contentment as you weather this time of bereavement.*

*Jeanus B. Parks, Jr.*

---

**Jeanus B. Parks, Jr.** - March 01, 2013 at 03:42 PM



“ We the March Family and Marshall-March Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

---

**Marshall-March Funeral Homes** - March 01, 2013 at 09:08 AM