Sharp Street Church honors Morris Queen

Friday evening the members and friends of Sharp Street Memorial United Methodist Church presented a "This Is Your Life — Morris Chester Queen."

The occasion was to honor Mr. Queen for 25 years of faithful service to Sharp Street Church as its minister of music. Mr. Queen's friends gathered in the sanctuary to pay homage to a person who never missed a Sunday. As he himself said later, he "just wouldn't feel right not being in church on Sunday morning."

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RALPH EDWARDS

Mr. Queen was educated in the Baltimore public schools. In his early teens he played the piano and organ for choirs in his church — the former Mt. Zion Methodist Church, now the St. Luke United Methodist Church — and later directed his own choir. He sang in the choruses of Booker T. Washington Junior High School and Douglass High School. While in the U.S. Navy, he was director of the Great Lakes Naval Choir, which was heard on weekly broadcasts from 1943 to 1945.

He also formed an directed an octet made up of Naval men who traveled from coast churches, colleges, and other places. In 1952 Mr. Queen set people, black and white, in to coast entertaining masses was graduated from Howard University "Cum Laude" and with the distinction of having earned two bachelor of music degrees; one for music education, and one for voice. In 1957 he received a masters degree in music composition from Howard University.

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On May 19, 1957, Mr. Queen had the honor of having his own composition played by the National Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Dr. Howard Mitchell at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. In that same month the Methodist Church bestowed upon Mr. Queen he degree of Minister of Music. In the summer of 1971. he was distinguished as the first black man to conduct a worksnop at the Annual Methodist Conference on Music at Wesleyan College, American University, in Washington, D.C.

One of his outstanding accomplishments remains to be the Morris Queen Chorale. The Chorale, under the direction of Mr. Queen, was organized in 1955 by Mrs. Francis Ashley Tillman.

It has performed at many of the major churches of Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Atlantic City, on radio and television, at several U.S. Army and Navy Bases, the Washington Annual Methodist Conference, the Johns Hopkins University. and has appeared with the Baltimore Actor's Guild, with William Bendix at Ford's Theater, with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in the concert version of Gershwin's Porgy and Bess," and with the Alamedians in the production of Hammerstein's "Show Boat."

He was appointed to the music department of the Baltimore Public Schools in September 1959 and is presently department head of music at the William H. Lemmel Junior High School.

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While sitting on a throne last Friday Mr. Queen heard a succession of his family and friends, speaking from the next room, recall incidents in his life. Among them were Mrs. Sadie Simmons, his aunt; Jenny and Clarence Queen, his sister and brother; and Mrs. Viola C. Jackson, who encouraged him to organize his first church choir at Mt. Zion Methodist Church while he was still in his teens.

Milton B. Allen remembered how had it was for the black sailor in the early forties when he and Mr. Queen were stationed at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. Although the Rev. Kelly L. Jackson first met Mr. Queen when the former was pastor at Mt. Zion Methodist Church, the Rev. Mr. Jackson admitted that after he was assigned to Sharp Street Church, he was instrumental in bringing Mr. Queen to Sharp Street as its choir director and organist.

Mark Fax, dean of the school of music at Howard University and a long-time friend, teacher, and advisor to Mr. Queen during the latter's college days told of his association with Mr. Queen while he was at Howard. The Rev. Edward G. Carroll, also a former pastor of Sharp Street Church, relived some of his experiences with Mr. Queen and told of his great appreaction for the Morris Queen Chorale whose performances he followed at each opportunity. When the Chorale rendered "Credo," the audience was impressed with this man's ability to create a vocal group with such wide capabilities. The Rev. Forrest C. Stith, presently executive secretary of the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Baltimore Conference and former pastor of Sharp Street, dubbed Mr. Queen as "Mr. Cool." Even though they sometimes had difference of opinions, things were always settled with dispatch and respect for one another's points of view.

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The former Miss Ovella Dorsey told of her deep respect and love for her husband and recited a touching poem she composed for her husband. Next, the youth and young adults choir of Sharp Street sang "Climb Every Mountain." At this point, filling in for the pastor of Sharp Street, The Rev. Richard L. Clifford (who had to leave temporarily) the Rev. Howard L. Cornish from Morgan State College Christian Center prayed a most beautiful and appropriate prayer of thanksgiving for Morris Queen that touched the hearts of all assembled.

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Mr. Queen was presented with many gifts from his church, choirs, and other well wishers. The combined choirs requested Mr. Queen to direct their singing of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," which turned out to be a moving and fitting climax of a glorious evening.

After the program in the sanctuary, Mr. Queen and his guests received other friends at a reception held in the lower auditorium of the church. The room was beautifully and gayly adorned with mementes and pictures of Mr. Queen at various stages in his career.

The committee who planned the affair included Mrs. Martha Allen, chairman; Samuel H. Wilson, co-chairman; Mesdames Martha Bradford, Constance Brent, Lottie Cole, Mary Ellis; James Ford, Miss Geneva Griffin, John Jackson, Aaron Ellis, master of ceremonies; and Mrs. DeBorgs Kerr, mistress of ceremonies.

Mrs. Frances Tillman prepared the choirs for all of the music rendered and was responsible for providing material for the program.

Provident group schedules show

Sunday, May 21. promises to be a milestone in the annals of the Provident Hospital Auxiliary.

This marks the date of their annual fashion show which this year will have a new date, a new location. and a new format.

The show, previously presented as a cooperative venture of the Auxiliary and the Schaefer Brewing Company will be sponsored by the women of the Provident Hospital Auxiliary. The elegance and beauty remain, but the focus has shifted. This year's spotlight on fads, fun and fashion by the Auxiliary will feature the newest and best looks of some of the Baltimore Area's most talented designers and well-known fashion houses.

It's president, Mrs. Beatrice Avery has announced that the fashion show-luncheon will be held at Martin's West from 2:00-5:00 p.m.

The color scheme will be red, white and blue to commemorate the election year and guests at the gala occasion will take part in a full course seated luncheon. A combo will entertain them during cocktails at the cash bar, throughout luncheon and during the fashion show. Mrs. Gloria Banfield is chairman of the event.

Guests will have a chance to win one of several elegant door prizes including hats, jewelry, clothing and gift certificates. Everyone attending the luncheon will receive a souvenir program, prepared by the ladies of the Auxiliary under the chairmanship of Mrs. Grace Burkett.

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The highlight of the day will be a fashion show featuring local models and many of Baltimore's leading fashion houses. Guests will be able to view the latest and most exciting clothing for spring and summer.

Among the designers who will present their interpretations of ways to look beautiful are Jacqueline Britton and Kenneth Carter of Trinidad. featuring exquisite fashions for women; Beverley Brown. Atantus, menswear designer; and Rodney RaAkbar of the House of RaAkbar who designs for both men and women.

Another first for this year's program is planned by the Auxilians to make attending the luncheon more convenient. They have arranged for a bus to take guests to and from Martin's West. The bus will leave from Provident's parking lot at 12:30 p.m. and will return here from the luncheon at 5:30 p.m.

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