

Ed Williams Tees Up for Induction into 1998 Glass & Metal Hall of Fame

By Helen B. Price



First Installment

“**T**here’s one thing everybody will tell you about Ed Williams: He is the most honest person you will ever meet, and you can take that to the bank.” Fritz Fridson said that about his friend “Uncle Ed” Williams, and Fridson should know; he has known Williams for more than 50 years.

Ed Williams, CEO of Edwards Glass Co. in Livonia, MI, will be inducted into the *Glass and Metal Hall of Fame™*. The prestigious award was established in 1994 to honor industry members who have given their time and talents for the betterment of the industry as a whole. The other 1998 inductees into the Glass Hall of Fame are Frank Dlubak, president of Dlubak Corporation in Blairsville, PA and Joe Kellman of Kellman Company in Chicago, IL (see *Industry News*, page 20). All three individuals will be inducted at a celebratory dinner in their honor during Glass Expo Midwest™ '98, on October 2 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel and Center at Grand Rapids, MI. The annual Glass Expo Midwest will also be held at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel and Center.

Upon learning that he was selected to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, Williams said he was “surprised, and really pleased. But then I thought, gosh, if they are picking me, they must be running out of good people to give it to,” he quips.

Williams’ 19-year friend and business associate, Jerry Wordhouse, will present the award to Williams during the gala dinner. Wordhouse is president of Edwards Glass Co. in Livonia, MI, the company that was founded and for-

merly owned by Williams. He says it will be a great honor and a challenge to present the award. “I don’t yet know what I’m going to say,” says Wordhouse, “but I am thinking about how words are inadequate to describe the life of a man and the feelings everyone in the industry has for Ed.” He knows it will be an emotional evening.

“Everybody loves Uncle Ed,” says Fridson, explaining that Williams got the nickname because he has several

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-Jerry Wordhouse

nephews who work in the glass industry. People just got used to hearing the name “Uncle Ed” and finally, it stuck.

Williams first ventured into the glass industry back in 1952 when he went to work at Iovan Glass Co. in Detroit. That same year, he joined the Detroit Glass Dealers Association (DGDA) and has worked tirelessly for that organization over the years. He served two terms of office as president and is a former national officer of the association. He was co-chairman of its convention in 1960 and is a co-founder of the group’s newsletter. Williams was named the *Dealer of the Year* in 1972 and in 1973 was named the *DGDA Glass Dealer of the Year*.

In 1956, four years after entering the glass industry, Williams purchased the American Glass Co. in Detroit for

“His dedication to the glass industry has always been a part of his life.”

-Fritz Fridson

\$2,500. He took the safe, a truck and the machinery and opened the original Edwards Glass Co.

In 1960, he merged with four other glass companies, forming Allied Glass and Metal. That organization lasted only three years because there were

“too many chiefs, too few Indians,” according to Williams.

In 1963, his company was again an independent business, dealing primarily in residential windows and commercial glazing. He owned the business for the next 23 years and sold it in 1986. The new owner was one of Williams’ oldest business associates and one of his best friends, Jerry Wordhouse.

“I had heard that Ed was thinking about selling his business,” Wordhouse says, remembering that the two talked about the possibility of Wordhouse buying the company for more than two years. During that time, while neither referred specifically to a possible buyout, they discussed business philosophies, treatment of employees, how to do business successfully and hundreds of other topics.

“We didn’t use those words exactly,

but all along, that’s what we were talking about,” says Wordhouse, adding that

concern for the employees and a determination to assure that none of them would lose anything when the business was finally sold was the most critical element

of the sale for Williams. “Some have been here for 25 or 30 years, and they are still here,” says Wordhouse.

“One day, I just said to him, ‘Well, are you ready to sell now?’ and he said ‘yes.’ Thirty days later, the deal was final, and nobody in the industry knew a thing about it until it was done,” Wordhouse remembers. He says the deal called for a six-year buyout and that Williams would stay on board until that time, “but he’s still here, and we are still working together and loving it,” says Wordhouse. Williams is CEO of the company and Wordhouse serves as president.

“His dedication to the glass industry has always been a part of his life,” says Fridson, adding that Williams was a founding member and the first president of the Glazing Contractors Association (GCA). “He has volunteered for so

many things in these organizations,” Fridson says, noting that none were paid positions and all involved a great amount of Williams’ personal time.

Robert L. (Bob) Rombach, a glass industry sales representative who has been calling on Williams for about 27 years, says, “Ed Williams has had the most successful combination of retail, glazing and automotive glass business of anybody in the state of Michigan. When you figure business activity, volume and ethical standards, nobody has done more than Ed,” Rombach praises.

Ethics, loyalty, friendship, fair-mindedness and similar characteristics are words that one hears often when asking people about Ed Williams. A 1992 article in the DGDA newsletter quotes him as saying that success is not only determined by whether the company makes a profit. “Success also is defined as knowing as much about the industry as possible. This is done by the use of trade magazines and through trade associations. Something else that adds to success are the employees. Remember that success takes teamwork. In order to keep the respect of the employees, I stand behind them through conflicts while treating them as fairly as possible.”

And, the article continues, Williams was often heard to say to his employees, “If you wouldn’t be proud to hang your work in your own home, then it isn’t good enough for the customer.” Guided by these principles, Williams has lived his life and successfully operated his business, making and keeping many close friends along the way.

Diana Brown has been a friend of

continued on page 50



Ed Williams ventured into the glass industry in 1952, the same year he joined the Detroit Glass Dealers Association.

Glass & Metal Hall of Fame

continued from page 49

Williams for about ten years. She is the executive administrative assistant of the Construction Association of Michigan (CAM), which manages the GCA. "I would describe him as very gentle, kind, and always sincere," says Brown.



Ed Williams (left) with Mervin Murphy, a long time associate and friend.

"I think his loyalty to his suppliers and to people like me, have also contributed to his success," Rombach adds.

A Deserving Honoree

"I think his greatest contribution to the industry is his participation in glass industry associations," says Rombach. "That kind of work can be a thankless job, but he is so involved in it. His untiring participation in the industry affects so many people. He really is always willing to work for the betterment of the industry."

"He has contributed so much time and effort to the industry," Virgil Taylor agrees. Taylor, who has known Williams since 1960, is the general manager of RAMCO, a division of Reliable Glass based in Detroit, MI. "He's always there when the associa-

tion needs help. If you ever need anything, you can call on Ed Williams and he will respond," says Taylor.

Adding to the chorus, Bill Churchill, Sr., claims, "It's his dedication to the industry. He's been a principal in organizing the DGDA and the G C A . . ." Churchill, who is chairman of the board of Koerts Glass & Paint Co., Inc. in Flint, MI, observes, "I've served on many boards of directors with him and several committees. We worked together on negotiations with labor

organizations and studied a lot of issues that are really important to the glass industry. He is always there."

Abiding Passion

When Williams is not working for the betterment of the glass industry, his abiding passion is golf. "He used to be a no-handicap golfer," Taylor remembers. Yet while he is good, Williams never forgets that golf is a game.

"One time we were playing on a course in Florida," Taylor recalls. "There were a lot of trees on that course, and we were on a very narrow tee and the fairway was lined with trees. We decided to charge each other 25 cents, whenever anybody hit a tree. Somebody took a tee shot and we heard the ball hit, and then we heard Ed counting: 'one, two, three, four.' He kept on counting until I heard him say

nine. He said the ball was bouncing from tree to tree," laughs Taylor.

"I remember that game," Williams joins in. "The person who hit the least number of trees won the money. I don't remember now who won, but I remember he won \$38 or \$39."

Williams has won many tournaments over the years. He frequently wins the "Low Medallist" and "Club Champion" competitions and has a total of six holes-in-one to his credit. And, not only does he win them, Williams is frequently found at the helm when a group needs someone to organize a tournament or outing.

"Williams has been a member of St. Aidan's (Catholic) Church for many years," Fridson recalls, "and one of his best friends is Archbishop Alex Brunett. Uncle Ed was working on organizing a golf tournament and Fr. Brunett (who had not yet been named an Archbishop) helped him get it going. It became the St. Aidan's golf tournament and they still have it today." Additionally, three years ago, the DGDA established the *Ed Williams Annual Golf Outing*, renaming the yearly event in honor of Williams.

Churchill, who has been playing golf with Williams for some 20 years, sums it up. "He's excellent. I hate to admit it, but he beats me almost every time. But I keep coming back for more, because after awhile, we forget about winning or losing; we just enjoy playing the game." Churchill describes Williams as "a gentleman, besides being a good golfer. He has a warm personality and he's a good businessman."

Personal Notes

One can't describe Williams without mentioning Norma, his wife of 50 years. Many in the industry know Norma as a fixture at the meetings for

those associations in which Williams is so involved—in fact, she's been to at least 30 national glass conventions with him, according to Williams.

"She's been very instrumental to my career," he says, noting that Norma led her own successful career as personnel administrator for General Motors. "When I was starting my business, she was the one bringing in the beans and potatoes."

Ed Williams adds that despite her recent broken hip, Norma will be on hand for the Hall of Fame induction ceremony. "I don't get very far without her," he laughs.

Wordhouse says another of the most basic characteristics about Williams is his religion. "It's the foundation of his life and it guides everything he does—his integrity, the way he treats people, the way he understands other people—it all comes from that," he says. But Wordhouse points out that Williams does not flaunt his religion. "He never talks about it, he just lives it," says Wordhouse.

Thoughtfulness toward other people appears to be a common memory for those who know Williams. Fridson remembers an incident that he believes proves the kind of friend Uncle Ed really is. "My wife and I were about to celebrate a wedding anniversary and Ed and his wife were on a vacation in Europe. They bought us a Waterford crystal decanter, but Ed wouldn't let the store pack it and ship it to us. He was afraid it might get broken, so he carried it on his lap on the plane for weeks, everywhere they went, until they flew home. It never got broken. That's the kind of friend he is," says Fridson.

"He's quite a gentleman, and he's very affable, a 'meeter and a greeter,'" says Fridson. "He's boisterous, but he's a diamond in the rough. Nobody ever gets mad at Ed.

"But there is one bad thing you should know about Uncle Ed," Fridson reveals: "He cheats. He knows he's not supposed to eat chocolate ice cream and chocolate syrup, but he cheats, because he eats it anyway," Fridson quips. "Ed always says, 'Don't tell Norma,' but I think she knows anyway."

If that's his only vice, it's easy to understand why Ed Williams is soon to be among the prestigious members of the *Glass and Metal Hall of Fame*. For information about attending the gala dinner honoring this year's inductees, call USGlass magazine at (540)720-5584.

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Norma Williams, Ed's wife of 50 years, has accompanied him to at least 30 national glass conventions.

Don't Miss the Fifth Annual Glass and Metal Hall of Fame™ Dinner and Induction Ceremony

Join us in paying tribute to this year's honorees for their contributions to the industry on Friday, October 2 at 7 p.m. at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel and Center in Grand Rapids, MI. The ceremony will be held during Glass Expo Midwest™ '98. The inductees are:

- **Frank Dlubak of Dlubak Corporation in Blairsville, PA;**
- **Joe Kellman of Kellman Company in Chicago, IL; and**
- **Ed Williams of Edwards Glass Co. in Livonia, MI.**

Tickets to the cocktail, dinner and ceremony are available for \$79. To register or for more information, contact USGlass magazine at 540/720-5584. In addition, those wishing to sponsor an amenity at the dinner in honor of an inductee may contact USGlass for details.

Get the Latest at Glass Expo Midwest '98!

Plan to be on hand when the flat glass and metal industry descends upon Grand Rapids, MI, October 2-3 for Glass Expo Midwest™ '98, the first major industry event to be held in Michigan in 25 years.

The event, to be held at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel and Center, continues USGlass magazine's commitment to providing high-quality, affordable regional education. In addition, it will feature the fifth annual *Glass and Metal Hall of Fame™* induction ceremony, to be held at a gala dinner on October 2.

The two-day event will feature the latest in education, demonstration, workshops, as well as social events, trade show and a tour of Tubelite, Inc. of Reed City. In addition, the International Best Sander Drag Race Association will bring its unique race to the expo.

For information about exhibiting or attending, or to register to attend the Hall of Fame dinner, call 540/720-5584.