

Farewell, brother — we'll all miss Thomas Bright

Long after the affectionate term “brother” had become a cultural relic of the 1960s, Thomas W. Bright was still using it — probably until the day he died, at age 90, on Friday.

“Hello, brother (or sister),” was his universal greeting. Once you made his acquaintance, you were part of the brotherhood. And your life was changed, at least slightly, in witness of his disarming warmth, uniqueness and unbending resolve.

“Brother” Tom Bright was a civil rights activist to the core, a former president of the Easton area NAACP who not only worked incessantly to improve opportunities for blacks, but exuded a unshakable belief in the goodness of all people. Four decades ago, he was at the front of the civil rights movement in Easton — a calling to which he responded for nearly a half-century — and he used his persuasiveness to good advantage.

Often he infuriated local government leaders by pelting them at public meetings with pleas to do more to make jobs available to blacks. They didn't stay angry for too long.

He counseled many youths at his church and from his South Side home, realigning some attitudes, pushing education, feeling the pride of seeing children go on to careers and families — enjoying the benefits and rights that the people of his generation had walked so many miles to obtain, and later, to preserve. He touched thousands of lives through his words, his faith, and his unabashed love of others.

But all you need to know about the man is what he wrote, at age 59, about himself in a resume for The Express-Times' files:

“He has a high school education. He has received a B.S. in communication with black people, an M.S. in communication with white people, and a Ph.D. in communication with black and white. These four degrees are given by man, but the greatest degree given by God is W.K.C.S. (wisdom, knowledge and common sense.)”

Peace, brother.