

Doug Martin reaches out helping hand to community, inspires area youth

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Doug Martin has spent most of his life in retirement helping others and working to inspire youth.

Now in his mid-80s, Martin has been retired since 1965. He remains an active member with the 100 Black Men organization in Alton. His wife, **Alice**, is an alderman on the Alton City Council.

Doug Martin grew up in Gary, Ind., the same town as Michael Jackson and actually knew Michael's father, Joe, when he was young. Music and singing were also a big part of Doug's early life as he joined a Christian quartet at age 13. Doug's music career got a bump when he became a member of "The Drifters," a legendary singing group, for about five months. He had his own singing group in St. Louis in 1953 to 1955. He said "politics" got him out of The Drifters.

Doug spent 18 months in Korea during the Korean War.

Fifty-one years ago, Doug married his wife, Alice, and he said they have been happy together ever since.

"Without Alice I don't know if I would have made it this far," he said. "Alice is an amazing, wonderful woman."

He said he considers himself the founding president of Alton's 100 Black Men and said he loves what the **100 Black Men** have done in the community to help lead youth in the right direction. He also has worked diligently in the **Coalition Of Concerned Citizens** in Alton, another group that has made a difference.

Martin credits President Barack Obama for opening many doors for the black race.

"My wife and I went to Obama's inauguration," he said. "That was really a treat. I have a grandson and I tell him today to get your education. Nobody will give you anything. Pick what you want out of life and stick to it."

Through his entire life, Doug said he feels the Lord has been with him, especially when he was homeless as a teenager.

"My mother died in 1929 and my father had left and they were going to put me in an orphan home, but I lived with my grandfather and that didn't work," he said. "I had some good classmates who knew I didn't have anywhere to sleep and they would open the back door so I could come in. I wanted to join the Navy but I wasn't old enough. This was a rough period of time."

After he returned from the service, his brother moved to St. Louis and he followed. He started singing over in Alton and he met his wife, Alice. In 1964, they were officially married in Alton. He ended up working professionally with Olin Corporation and did some other work over the years.

Doug says his wife made him settle down and they have had a good life ever since.

“She is my rock,” he said. “I don’t know what I would have done without her. She made me want to achieve something after I got to retirement.”

During retirement, Doug has become close to Rev. Samuel White, a prominent local minister. White is pastor of Monroe Memorial Church Of God In Christ in Alton.

“He (Rev. White) is the foundation and one of the reasons the 100 Black Men has such stable ground and has stood its ground,” he said. “He was one of the founding people along with Tony Henderson and he has worked hard to make sure the 100 Black Men had a positive image and a place for growth in the community. He has recruited young men to be part of the 100 Black Men and impressing on them the importance of positive images and great character.”

Martin has spent considerable time working with youth and said he hopes if he has any legacy to be left it is with that.

“God has been with me ever since I was a young man,” he said. “There is no way I could have made it as a teenager being homeless with no family without the Lord. I am so thankful for the gifts I have been given in my life.”