

Ed, a pioneer of Opus Dei in East Africa

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Edmund Hernandez passed away on Sunday, April 14th at the age of 93 in California. He was one of the first lay members of Opus Dei to come to

Kenya on 25 Aug 1958. An architect by profession, Ed opened his own firm soon after arriving and began the architectural work that he continued to practice In Kenya for another 25 years.

Ed Hernandez was born in Peoria, Illinois to Michael and Juanita Hernandez. Ed had five brothers (George, Robert, Raymond, Henry and Louis) and one sister (Connie), all of whom were educated in the public Catholic Schools of Peoria, Illinois.

When Ed was 16 years old he drove down to the Peoria Department of Motor Vehicles.. The clerk asked him how he got there, and when he told him he drove, they gave him his license without any further questions. He served in the US Army at the very end of the World War II during which he was posted to the Aleutian Islands. Thanks to the GI

Bill that financed higher education for former armed forces personnel, for which he was ever grateful, he was able to attend the University of Illinois, where he graduated with both an undergraduate and a master 's degree in architecture. Ed started practicing his profession while working as an adjunct professor for two years at the University of Illinois in Chicago. Ed then went to live in Rome for two years, where he worked as an architect at the Roman College of the Holy Cross and helped in the initial construction of the buildings for the headquarters of Opus Dei in Rome.

One day Ed met Fr Joseph Muzquiz, one of the first priests of Opus Dei and one of the first people to go to US to start Opus Dei, and told him that he had dreamt of marrying and having a large family, just as his parents had done. He could not imagine that God was going to be

much more generous with him and give him the even bigger family that Opus Dei really is.

After his two years in Rome he was one of the first people of Opus Dei whom Saint Josemaria asked to go to East Africa.

During his years in Kenya (1958-1983) he helped the beginnings of Opus Dei and worked as an architect. Some of his projects were the original Strathmore College, now Strathmore School in Lavington, Kianda School, Kianda Residence, Riverside Residence, Finance House (Koinange Street), Protection House (Haile Selassie Avenue), the Telecommunications College (now Multimedia University), and other educational institutions.

After spending 25 years in Kenya working as an architect and helping in the work of Opus Dei, he returned

to the US where he continued his architectural practice..

Ed was a good and kind man. He was described as a gentleman by many of his friends. He was also very smart and would amaze people with his great recall of details of events from 50 to 60 years prior.

His funeral took place in St Mary's Catholic Church in Oakland on April 23, 2019 and he was buried at Holy Cross Cemetery in Colma, California, US.

Everybody in Kenya and in many parts of East Africa are grateful to him for his fidelity, for being one of the first to come to Kenya and for planting many seeds of the spirit of Saint Josemaría in this part of the world.

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