**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH**

**FOR**

**KATHI COMBS-BYRD**

**REVISED**

Hello everyone!! Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for that introduction! What can I say? Actually, I have a lot to say… all of it good!! Don’t worry!! It’s a privilege to be here tonight with all of you and it is an honor to have been named Realtor of the Year by **OUR** organization, the Southern Indiana Realtors Association. Even as I stand here alone, on this podium, I want to make something **very** clear. Although I am the grateful and proud recipient of this year’s acknowledgement, I can say with absolute certainty that it wouldn’t have been possible to receive this honor without the graciousness, guidance, and good will of all of you that are involved in making our industry as successful as it has been, is, and will be in the future.

The English poet, Alfred, Lord Tennyson taught us, “I am part of all that I have met.” I have been blessed in my life to have learned gratitude at an early age, and as I live and learn, that sense of appreciation and thanks grow deeper. Everyone that I have met, from my family to my friends, my wonderful husband and two great kids, my mentors, my colleagues, and of course my greatest teachers…. our clients, have each infused within me an opportunity to see and experience life and business in constantly evolving and changing lights.

From the very beginning, from the earliest memories I have, my parents were there supporting me, encouraging me, and letting me know that nothing was impossible. (**Please update this if it doesn’t seem accurate**) My late father Vernon, may he Rest In Peace, was an incredible example of what it means to work with purpose, integrity, and compassion. Although he is not physically with us, every day his spirit and wisdom guide me to find the solutions and balance so necessary to personal and professional success. To my mother, America, you are my heart and soul, my guide and greatest cheerleader. Everything I do, every step I take, each accomplishment I achieve is as a direct result of your love and guidance. (**If you want to make a joke you can say)** This award belongs to you just as much as it does to me…. Of course we’ll be keeping it in **MY** house…. But you can visit it anytime!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Thanks to the love and devotion of my parents, I have a deep and fulfilling relationship with God, and I am grateful for the strength and faith that guides me when the road is not clear, that lights the way when I am uncertain, and that allows me to experience the joy of supporting others to realize their dreams. To my fantastic husband Travis, could I have asked for, wished for, prayed for, a better partner in life? I don’t think so!! Knowing that you and Alexis and Camryn are there to complete our house and home gives me added purpose and inspiration to do what I do. Knowing what it means to be fulfilled in a loving home environment feeds and fuels me to work with others to achieve their dreams. Thank you. I love you.

Everyone starts somewhere on their professional journey and my path began in kind of an unlikely place…. Or was it? I began my career in, of all places, an optical shop, which, by real estate standards might not seem auspicious, but there are no accidents in life…. And pardon the pun…. It took a man of **vision** to see my potential. Kenny McKeand, my first boss, saw something in me… he thought I had a promising future….. probably elsewhere… and he encouraged me to explore the possibility of going into real estate. I am so grateful to Kenny for his generosity of spirit and for demonstrating his confidence in me. When he saw that my skill set might have been more effective in a bigger arena, he gave me the time off to explore new branches of my sales career. A person like that, one with a selfless concern for others, is rare. We can all learn from his kind actions. I know I did and still do to this day. When I got into the real estate world, I was blessed to have the late, wonderful G. Donn Bishop as an early mentor. He too, taught me well and his principles and dedication are a part of my ethic to this day. As I have been the beneficiary of experience thanks to those that saw that certain “something” within me, I too, believe that the essence of fulfillment is to “pay it forward.” I want to acknowledge all of my wonderful partners at Schuler Bauer, and in particular, Cathy Otte. There’s no one else with whom I’d rather share a workload, and besides…. How much fun is it to have callers guess which Kathi is on the phone?... and when we’re **REALLY** busy, it’s almost like talking to myself…. Believe me…. Lots of times I’m tempted!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Every single day provides us with gifts… the ability to learn through experience. **OH HAVE I LEARNED THROUGH EXPERIENCE!!!** (**Wait for the laugh**). When I began, way back **THEN**, there were different procedures to follow…. I’m talking about the “good old days” when I first got my license… before lock boxes were used. Remember when we would have to pick up keys at the listing agents’ offices and they were all clearly marked with the address… you know… almost like an engraved invitation to “Come right in and take something!” (**Wait for the laugh**)… it’s a good thing we evolved from **THAT**… but I will never forget that one time… this was also in the era of receiving printed listings every two weeks… well, one time, an agent had gotten a new listing… brand, spanking, **NEW**… not even a sign in the front yard…**YET**… the keys also hadn’t been delivered **YET**… what could **POSSIBLY** go wrong?!?!? Remember… new listing… no sign in the yard… I didn’t even have the paperwork, but being as enthusiastic as I tend to be, I continued with the plan to show the house that fine evening… I went to the home I **THOUGHT** was listed… the door was unlocked… I entered and yelled, “Realtor!!” …And was greeted with the soft, jazzy, enticing tones of Marvin Gaye…. I remember thinking, “Hmmm. Interesting touch!” … odd choice to play for showing the house, but, **HEY**! To each his own!! We walked through and checked each room, and when we got to the master bedroom, the door was shut… as we opened the door, there, in bed, were….. let’s just call them the “motivated” owners…. And they **WEREN’T** sleeping!!! (**Wait for the laugh**) we also discovered **VERY QUICKLY** they **WEREN’T SELLING!!!** We were in the **WRONG HOUSE!!!** We were meant to be at the house **NEXT DOOR!!!** (**Wait for the laugh)**. I guess we learned some **unforgettable** lessons on **THAT** day!! Yeah… if Marvin Gaye is on blast…. **LEAVE**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

As well as it’s true that “I am part of all that I have met,” it is also true that there are lessons to be learned in **every** experience we are blessed to share. One source of great comfort and wisdom comes from my participation in my faith. Recently, Pastor Nate Ross delivered a sermon about “Finishing Well,” or living a life of calling. While to some, “finishing well” may mean to be able to realize a comfortable retirement- to have all of the “toys” and advantages that would seem to be required to successfully live a well deserved “endgame,” but that’s not really what a well lived life is about…deep down inside, we all want to matter. We are placed here on earth to fulfill a purpose…. To live a life in the service of others. And the beauty of life is that we can serve in any capacity and make a difference. While some may think that achieving only a “noble purpose” constitutes “finishing well,” I’ve learned that each one of us has the potential to do remarkable, wonderful things for ourselves and for each other, every day. When I see the look on the face of a first time home buyer at the end of a closing, that joy is irreplaceable. When I know I’ve provided support to colleagues and friends, and when I’ve received encouragement in return… from mentors, clients, vendors, I am humbled and thrilled to learn and to appreciate every circumstance. I’m thankful for every situation and every lesson… and I **do** believe that God is in every single detail.

Every day, each one of us has the opportunity to be guided and inspired by how we live our lives…. Some of that motivation comes from the work we do and some come from snips of wisdom we randomly hear and read. I believe that we hear things and pay attention when we are “ready to receive” and are able to learn and grow from that wisdom. I hope I’ve said something to light a spark within you. I came across a quote that I just love, and I think it’s important to share. “If you want this to be **your** year, don’t just sit on the couch and wait for it. Go out. Make a change. Smile more. Be excited… don’t encourage negativity. Show more gratitude. Do things that challenge you. Be brave!”

Let’s remember that in the end, accolades are great and awards are wonderful. They inspire and they motivate and they encourage others, as do I, to “bring it,” to see who will step up to the plate and take the baton to lead this organization to newer goals and records. But it’s really up to each one of us to live our lives with excellence and intention. Who among us will be honored next year? Is it someone right in this room, or maybe there’s someone about to enter our industry, eager and driven, and “ready to rock.” What I **DO** know, is that whoever it is will be deserving and innovative and will join a very special list of realtors who have shown us what hard work and a sense of community can produce. I know I am honored to be considered a part of this group.

And speaking of “finishing well,” there is an author named Anna Quindlen. She wrote a book called, “A Short Guide to a Happy Life.” Her message is more important now than ever before. Anna also understands that “finishing well” is not the goal. The goal is to be on the journey- your own personal adventure, and to pay attention, absorb the fine points, be aware of your surroundings, get a life, and fully participate…. In other words, “Enjoy the ride.” Quindlen reminds us to “get a life in which you are generous…” …. Pay attention to the details, no matter how small they may seem at the time. She tells us, “Life is made of moments, glittering mica in a long stretch of grey cement.” Receiving this award, is, for me, definitely one of gleaming grains of shiny mica. I am drawn to the light of this recognition but at the same time I know that I am here to pave the way for others… for my family, my friends, my colleagues and my clients. It’s those glittering moments that provide a glimpse of the fresh air of accomplishment, but like those specs of mica, they are held together by a strong foundation. I believe balance is found in appreciation of both the shiny highlights and the concrete, every day occurrences that allow them to stand out.

Thank you all so much for this recognition. I want to acknowledge all of you for being my partner in building an increasingly strong SIRA. I look forward to our continued adventures together…. Ones in which we provide houses and **homes** for our clients and **ourselves**. Here’s to a productive, balanced, successful business!! Thank you!!