

BACKGROUND ON A. MELVIN MILLER

A. Melvin Miller: A Legacy Of Love, Loyalty And Service

Posted By *Ellen Jones* On May 13, 2015 @ 6:03 pm In Obituaries,Other News | [Comments Disabled](#)

By Carla Branch
alexandrianews.org



Melvin Miller (Photo: Regan Kireilis)

Albert Melvin Miller loved his family, his friends, Saint Augustine's University, his adopted hometown of Alexandria and sports. He dedicated his life to demonstrating that love and his passion for public service. He died on Sunday, May 10, at 83. He will be missed.

[Funeral services](#) will be held on Wednesday, May 20, at 11:00 a.m. at Alfred Street Baptist Church, 301 S. Alfred Street in Alexandria. There will be a viewing at the church from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Another viewing will be held on Tuesday, May 19, at Meade Memorial Episcopal Church, 322 N. Alfred Street, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

"Melvin was indeed an icon in our City. He lived each day making a difference in the lives of many. He was an advocate for the poor and affordable housing for all. He will be dearly missed and our prayers and sympathies are with his family, always," said Alexandria Mayor Bill Euille.

Miller was born on Nov. 14, 1931, and grew up in Haddenfield, New Jersey. He left New Jersey to attend Saint Augustine's College in 1948 and earned his A.B. in history and political science. After graduation, he attended Howard University's School of law, where he earned his J.D. in 1955. He was admitted to the Virginia Bar in 1956 and moved to Alexandria in 1958.

He remained committed to Saint Augustine's throughout his life, serving on the Board of Trustees for 35 years. He also served as Chairman of the Board from 2007 to 2008. In March 1999, he was appointed to serve as the first interim president of the University until November 1999.

“I am very saddened about the loss of Trustee Melvin Miller,” said Board of Trustee Chairman Rodney Gaddy. “Throughout my tenure on the board, Trustee Miller was a trusted advisor, confidant and friend. His service to this university is unparalleled and his quiet leadership and wisdom have helped propel the institution to greater heights. He will be greatly missed.”

Saint Augustine’s President Dr. Everett B. Ward said: “Saint Augustine’s University has suffered a great loss. Trustee Miller was a tremendous asset to this institution and a great personal friend. His love and commitment to his dear alma mater was evident in his tireless service. Our hearts and prayers go out to his family and friends and we will continue to honor his legacy by doing the hard work necessary to keep Saint Augustine’s University strong.”

Miller believed strongly that there is a place for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and he helped many T. C. Williams High School graduates matriculate at his alma mater.

“Mr. Miller was more than a mentor to me. Ironically, we had more in common than many of his other mentees. He was active at my alma mater Saint Augustine’s University but also in my hometown, Alexandria,” said Aurielle Jones, a 2009 T. C. graduate and a 2014 graduate of Saint Augustine’s. “He started mentoring me my senior year of high school and continued to well after I graduated college.

“Mr. Miller was a proud alumni of St. Aug. He served on the Board of Trustees. We shared memories of St. Aug, which enriched my experience and help me become well rounded and grounded. I knew I had to honor him and just getting good grades wouldn’t cut it, I became extremely active at my school in mentoring, campus activities to improve residential experiences, academic achievement, beautifying the campus and supporting the Falcons. His legacy of being involved, giving to the community went beyond St. Aug’s campus. It meant helping Raleigh and any other community you lived in.

“The sense of giving and being a voice for others was only one of the lessons he taught me. Mr. Miller always said St. Aug’s would prepare me for life – well, Mr. Miller you were the one who got me through some really tough times when all I had to do was summon that Falcon pride you taught me to hold dear.

“He always had a big smile on his face during any occasion. My favorite memory was receiving a big hug from him at the end of the stage when I graduated from St. Augustine’s University in May 2014. At that moment I knew I made him proud of all my achievements and accomplishments and he could proudly call me his mentee. And as he taught me I will be at this year’s graduation all smiles and full of Falcon pride,” Jones said.

It did not take Miller long to get involved in Alexandria’s civic and political life. He ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 1963 and was appointed to various boards and commissions. He served on the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority first from 1971-77 and from 2000-2015. He was the Chairman of that Board for nearly 20 of those years.

“I had the good fortune of working with Mel for the last 16 years,” said Alexandria City Manager Mark Jinks. “He was an indefatigable advocate for affordable housing. The national

award-winning innovative Chatham Square mixed-income housing project is a testament to Mel's tenacity in leading a large, complicated and controversial project through to successful completion and operation."

Miller also was instrumental in ARHA's plans to redevelop all of their Alexandria sites. The redevelopment of James Bland and James Bland Addition is nearing completion and ARHA is negotiating with development partners for the redevelopment of five of their largest sites.

"Melvin Miller was a true Alexandria icon and we have lost part of the conscience of the City," said Former Alexandria Mayor Kerry Donley, who worked with Miller on a variety of issues for three decades. "Melvin was part of the generation that built this City and, while we are eternally grateful for his contributions, we are saddened that he is no longer with us. I truly feel like I have lost one of my best friends.

"Melvin was a housing stalwart. But Melvin's commitment to housing went much further than merely the provision of affordable housing, but also to the condition of the housing itself. Whether at ARHA or at HUD, Melvin felt people deserved clean, safe, and decent housing. And you know what...he was right.

"Politicians in Washington should take a lesson from Melvin Miller, 'do what is right and you will get things done.'

"Next to his commitment to Alexandria, Melvin was known for his passion for high school athletics. All of Alexandria's high schools were favorites of Melvin as were the variety of sports they played. You could always find him in the stands, usually in the top row. While at a game we would discuss the issues of the day, but never at the expense of the game itself. Many things in life brought him joy, and high school sports was one of them," Donley said.

Miller could be found at a high school sporting event on almost any evening or weekend. While his presence was noted at many T. C. events, he was seldom seen at any girls' games or matches until a friend reminded him that Title IX was passed in 1973 and that girls really could play entertaining sports. He came to watch that friend's daughter play basketball and almost never missed the friend's youngest daughter's volleyball games. He even attended the youngest child's college graduation last year.

Miller was passionate about education. Virginia Republican Governor Linwood Holton appointed him to the Virginia Council of Higher Education in 1971. He served for eight years.

In 1986, the Alexandria City Council appointed Miller to the Alexandria City School Board. He served until 1993, and was Board Chair from 1990-92.

"Melvin was very committed to education in Alexandria – and to the T. C. Williams sports teams," said School Board Member Patricia Hennig. "As a School Board member and Chair, he was even handed in his actions, voted his conscience and took time to listen to the public.

“His wicked sense of humor was one of the things that I loved most about him – zingers would come out and no one could believe it was Melvin. Melvin Miller, Fred Day, Nelson Green Sr. – Alexandria is a poorer city for their passing, and I hope that folks will appreciate all they did for the City,” Hennig said.

Former City Councilwoman and School Board Member Claire Eberwein knew Miller well. “Melvin's reputation as member of an elite group of Alexandria's African American leaders was firmly established when I moved to Alexandria,” Eberwein said. “When first elected to the School Board, my naivete gave way to a quick and thorough education as to the unique racial politics of the South. Being a "Yankee" from Michigan, I found it hard to fathom that the public high schools were fully integrated only in the late 1960's and early 70's. That it was done as a matter of great controversy belies the relative softness of the portrayal in the movie "Remember the Titans" – the persons on that school board and the civil rights leaders in this community acted with determined bravery in the face of deeply entrenched attitudes and fear induced headwinds. Melvin was there – front and center – during that time and again and again over the years.

“During my years in public service – strategizing on issues, working on issues, arguing about issues – we became friends. I would like to think good friends – the kind that stand by you in times of trouble and have your back because of mutual respect based on shared values. But the very best times I will remember with Melvin are about laughter – the threesome lunches we shared with Carla Branch – the search for the best Italian food and the best lemon drop martini. The totally irreverent comments about "the usual suspects" in the politics of this town. And shucking corn and watching the sun go down over a campfire on a lake in northern Michigan. Melvin, I am mad at you – you went too soon for a lot of folks who needed you. God speed,” Eberwein said.

Dr. Herbert Berg served as Superintendent of the Alexandria City Public Schools from 1995-2001. “Mel and I have been friends since the very first summer I came to Alexandria to be the School Superintendent,” Berg said. “He knew it would be a challenging assignment and he wanted my tenure to be successful. The community wanted good and improving schools and he volunteered to help that first summer.

“He gave me advice on issues important to him, coached me on local community reaction to proposals I was working on and gave me wise senior counsel as a former School Board member and former Chair.

“But most of all as the years passed, we became better and better friends. While I was in South Carolina, he and Herman Boone drove down for a few days to see me and to ‘check up’ on how I was doing and make sure I planned to return and actually retire in Alexandria.

“He loved his children and grandchildren immensely. We never met that his family was not a big part of the conversation. He was a great friend,” Berg said.

Shortly after moving to Alexandria, Miller joined the Departmental Progressive Club, which was founded by a group of black civil servants in the 1930s because they could not join white-only clubs or drink in white-only bars. “I have fond memories of Melvin Miller and his involvement with the Departmental Progressive Club,” said William Chesley, current DPC president. “Melvin was a member of the DPC before I joined in 1988. Melvin sponsored my membership in the DPC in 1988. My wife worked at the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the mid to late 1980s and she knew Melvin via his role as a top official in the HUD Administration at the time. She mentioned to me in the spring of 1988 that Melvin knew of my work heading the Sports Section of the City’s Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities at the time. She urged me to reach out to Melvin. I met him for lunch in downtown Washington, D.C. and from that point on our friendship began.

“I quickly learned that Melvin was a highly regarded person in the Alexandria community and widely respected for his work in the area of housing and development in urban communities. I also learned that he was an avid sports fan and particularly a fan of high school sports, especially T. C. Williams HS and St. Stephen's/St. Agnes HS where his son Mark was a standout basketball player. He followed the athletic careers of my two youngest brothers who played at Anacostia High School in Washington, D.C. before they both left one year apart on football scholarships to the University of Southern California. Melvin was a big fan of Notre Dame and he kidded me, at least I thought so, that he would root for them except when they played Notre Dame. I realized he was serious when he flashed that big smile when I saw him following Notre Dame’s late season upset of USC in 1989 that knocked USC out of the National Championship picture. I often wondered but never asked Melvin how he became such a big Notre Dame fan or of the New York Yankees, a another team he loved.

“Melvin was a highly revered member of the DPC and served two stints as President (1997-1998 and 2011-2014). He led a much needed major renovation of the Club facility in 1998 and was instrumental in a number of the community projects and initiatives the Club was involved in over the years. He successfully pushed the Club to affiliate with the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria almost from the start of the Fund. DPC members admired and respected Melvin for his sustained work in the Alexandria community from the day he arrived in Alexandria. He was always a voice of reason and could be counted on to steer the DPC in the right direction when necessary and he was the ultimate consensus builder. He had a knack for building consensus, which I saw evidence of at the DPC and through his work as member and Chair of the Alexandria City Public School Board and the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

“Another passion of Melvin’s was his Alma Mater, Saint Augustine’s University in Raleigh North Carolina. Melvin was a member of the Board of Trustees and he would host a trustee meeting at the DPC annually. Melvin was instrumental in getting a good number of local high school students in Saint Augustine’s University and I can think of four or five students that graduated from Saint Augustine’s University. I can’t begin to describe how much I admired and respected Melvin. I saw him as many others did – a great man and leader who got things done and who truly cared about the Alexandria community and making things better for all who live in Alexandria,” Chesley said.

People knew Miller for a variety of reasons. Alexandria's General Registrar Anna Leider remembered how she first became acquainted with him.

"Like many Alexandrians, I knew Mel Miller through his extensive work within the community. But I first met Mel back in 1977. It was my senior year of high school, and his son Eric and I had each been accepted to Amherst College, a small liberal arts school in Western Massachusetts. Even though Eric and I had only met a couple of times (through a close mutual friend), Mel and his wife opened their beautiful home to me and my parents so we could all get acquainted before heading North. I was very shy back then, but any nerves I had about going away to college ended that day. I would no longer be alone in a strange, far-away town. I already had a friend. That small gesture by Mel was life-changing for me. And our ongoing shared affection for Amherst, provided us with a lasting bond," Leider said.

In February, 2014, Miller agreed to become the Chairman of the Board of alexandrianews.org when a new nonprofit corporation assumed ownership of the site. Wayne Hulehan works as a photographer for alexandrianews.org and knew Miller well. "Melvin and I became instant friends through our shared passion for Titan football, Alexandria and the work of ARHA," Hulehan said. "We brought to the friendship open minds and clean hearts. I treasure the memories of coffee at St. Elmo's, me like a student at the knee of a prophet as Melvin shared his memories – from meeting Eula to hanging out his first shingle to his fight to end segregation in the city he loved. I am blessed to have known Melvin. A kinder, gentler man I have never met. I find solace in knowing he is now reunited with his beloved Eula and the Secret Eight (the FBI informant miscounted). Rest in peace, brother Melvin."

Rebecca Newsham began working with alexandrianews.org when she was a senior at T. C. Williams. She is now a member of the Board.

"I first met Melvin as an intern for alexandrianews. He frequently joined me and Carla at T. C. basketball games, providing commentary that helped me better understand the sport," Newsham said. "Because of his humble and unassuming nature, it wasn't until much later that I learned how influential Melvin was in the community. He was so active in so many aspects of life in Alexandria that I was shocked to find out that he had grandchildren that were my age! I feel privileged to have gotten to know Melvin over the past few years, and the City and I will miss him greatly."

Jim Boissonnault is also a member of the alexandrianews.org Board. "I probably spoke with Melvin about a dozen times in total. The last time was at an alexandrianews Board meeting shortly before his death. Even from my limited conversations, Melvin struck me for his wit, for never missing a beat in a conversation and when he had something serious to say, it was always spot on. I was looking forward to continued work with Melvin on the Board. I will miss him," Boissonnault said.

Author's Note

Melvin and I got to know each other when I became a reporter covering Alexandria in 1999. We subsequently became friends. Over the years, we had long and loud discussions about the various articles I wrote. Although we disagreed on many occasions, he never asked me to change

anything I wrote. He tried to change my mind about many things but never directly tried to change an article.

It was I who reminded him about Title IX and my daughters whose games he went to T. C. to watch. My youngest daughter, Miranda, sees Melvin as a godfather or uncle. He supported her by attending her high school sporting events and cheered at her high school graduation. Last year she graduated from West Virginia University and he traveled to Morgantown to be there when she got her diploma.

This was perhaps the most difficult article I have ever written. Melvin, I will miss you for the rest of my life.

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Alexandria Gazette Packet

Working To Make Life Better in Alexandria The dedication of Eula and Melvin Miller.

Thursday, January 29, 2009

This is the 11th in a series of profiles that chronicle Alexandria's Living Legends, people who are today's history makers. Living Legends of Alexandria is a joint project of the Rotary Club of Alexandria and the Alexandria Gazette Packet. Conceived and directed by Nina Tisara, it is designed as an ongoing project to identify and honor those individuals whose vision and dedication make a tangible difference to the quality of life in Alexandria. For more information or to nominate a Legend for next year's program, visit www.tisaraphoto.com/legends.

Eula and Melvin Miller have spent more than 50 years making Alexandria a better place to live. His contributions began with civil rights law and came to focus on housing for minority and lower-income people. Hers focused on improving the education and skills of young children and their caregivers. Both were driven by a strong sense of justice and equality.

The Millers have lived in Alexandria since January 1958. They had been married here the year before, choosing the city as a meeting place between his Army posting in Philadelphia and her home in North Carolina. When he got out of the Army, Melvin Miller, who had graduated from Howard University Law School in 1955, was looking for a place to practice law, and as he had passed the Virginia Bar Exam, Eula Miller suggested they try the city where they had married.

Melvin Miller hung out his shingle on a room upstairs from a drugstore at the corner of Alfred and Queen streets. He started with criminal law practice, but soon became involved in civil rights activism, doing pro bono work on school desegregation issues, though not as an attorney of record, and helping those involved with the Arlington lunch counter sit-ins in the early 1960s. He became active in Alexandria city issues, like housing, that affected African Americans.

"I think everybody has a code they live by, and I still have that," Eula Miller said recently. She had her first major insight into the need to fight injustice when she worked in an Atlantic City hotel between her junior and senior years of college. Her job was helping the head housekeeper check the quality of the maids' work, inspecting rooms after they were cleaned. One day she saw that the maids had to eat lunch outside at the back of the hotel in the summer heat. She worked in an air-conditioned office. At 19, she reacted fiercely to the injustice, urging them to strike for the right to eat indoors. "Somebody squealed," she said, "and I got fired. I called my daddy. His response was that I clearly needed a good education."

Melvin Miller explained his long pursuit of affordable and accessible housing: "I've always felt that in this city, with all the good intentions people have — when it comes down to housing the poor, it's too easy to do nothing."

THE MILLERS THEMSELVES had encountered difficulties finding a place to live within the city limits when they arrived here, first renting a room in a teacher's home. "You couldn't rent an

apartment outside the African American community. Most teachers, lawyers and doctors who served this community lived outside the city limits in Fairfax or D.C. and commuted," recalled Melvin Miller. In his legal and volunteer work, he pursued equity and justice in all areas affecting the civil rights of individuals, but gradually housing issues came to dominate his life, both professionally and in his civic and volunteer work.

Melvin Miller was born in Savannah, Ga., but moved as an infant to Haddonfield, N.J.. He graduated from high school at 16. A bright student, he'd not always seen the purpose of academic striving. A job stocking shelves in a grocery store quickly showed him the value of higher education. Then he heard about St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, N.C., where tuition was \$60 a semester and room and board was \$30 a month, including laundry. He figured he could handle that. "It was the first place where people made me think I could do something meaningful," Melvin Miller remembered. He has since encouraged many young Alexandrians to attend the same school, where he has served on the board of trustees and acted as interim president for seven months in 1999 while the board searched for a new president.

Eula Miller was born in Maxton, N.C. in 1933 and graduated from Bennett College in Greensboro in 1953. She later earned a master's degree in education from the George Washington University. She taught school in Charlotte, N.C., before her marriage, and again here in Alexandria afterward, but stopped for a while when the couple's three children came along. When she went back to teaching, she focused on early childhood. She saw that some children were less well prepared than others, so she started tutoring programs to help make up the differences, enlisting the city's middle class professionals to help.

She saw a need for better skills and education for caregivers. By the early 1970s, she had become a liaison between the Alexandria public schools and the new Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), working to put together a degree program for classroom instructional aides. Originally, she had meant to return to the Alexandria school system, but by the time the program was in place, she decided to stay at NOVA, where she eventually became head of the Early Childhood Education Program, a position she still holds.

Angie Godfrey, a former school board member and director of Alexandria's Head Start program, remembers Eula Miller as someone "who will work with anyone and everyone. She has such a vision and a sense of how to support and grow families in a community." Eula Miller also organized a program to help Head Start families make the transition to kindergarten.

ONE OF HER GREATEST successes was a program for teenage mothers that provided daycare so they could attend classes to study early childhood education. The goal was to teach them better parenting skills, but also to give them the training for careers as childcare providers, enabling them to achieve and to care for their own children. Some went on to further education, including 4-year colleges.

"She willed those kids to succeed," said Suzanne Chis, Alexandria's director of Social Services, who has worked with Eula Miller for many years. One of their early efforts was the City's day care center, which in the early '80s did not have credentialed caregivers. Eula Miller's efforts helped turn the

center around by helping provide staff training through the programs at NOVA. While some staffers resisted change at first, Chis said, Eula Miller's positive outlook provided a circle of reinforcement that encouraged people to grow and brought about positive change. It was the first center for low-income children in the country to receive national accreditation.

Carol Farrell, director of the Office for Early Childhood Development in the Department of Human Services, also has worked with Eula Miller for years and watched her design the courses and open up ways to make the collaboration with NOVA work. "Her goal is to break down barriers to achieve what's best for children," said Farrell. "The core of what she's done is her willingness, her passion, her advocacy for children and their caregivers and mothers."

Farrell and Chis both note that the story continues. NOVA still maintains a Head Start classroom and playground on the campus that serves city residents. Three years ago, when the city identified a need to provide more training for English language learners who work as caregivers, Eula Miller helped develop a program that combined interpretation and specialized language training with a focus on early childhood education. While learning English, they were also taught better classroom and childcare practices.

Back when the Millers were starting their family, it became clear that pro bono civil rights cases weren't going to pay the bills, and Melvin Miller took a job as an attorney at the Federal Housing Administration, the predecessor to today's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Ultimately, he became director of HUD's Metropolitan Washington Office. He quit HUD in 1969, but returned in 1977 as a deputy undersecretary in the Carter administration. He retired from the agency in 1997.

EARLY ON, Melvin Miller's civil rights activism led him to become a member of a group of Alexandria African Americans who met regularly to study issues affecting their community and work to improve the situation. The group was called the Secret Seven. "We didn't give ourselves that name," he said. We were actually eight. We think it was an FBI informer who named us after infiltrating the group," he said. "Nobody was in charge, but we agreed we would have one spokesperson. I was mostly that person."

The group always met at 10 p.m. or later, Melvin Miller recalled. "We pledged to be available to help each other and discuss critical issues at any time of day or night, by phone or in person. But we also socialized, sometimes gathering with our wives, not talking business."

The members became active in the political process, interviewing candidates who were willing. Because many of them were federal employees restricted by the Hatch Act, which limited political activities of government workers, they would ask other prominent members of the community to endorse candidates based on the research of the Secret Seven.

Melvin Miller unsuccessfully ran for City Council in 1963 and for mayor in 1976, but felt it was important to challenge the system and set a precedent for African Americans. He was appointed to the Alexandria Housing and Redevelopment Authority (ARHA) in 1970, serving as chair until 1977, when he returned to HUD. Miller was a member of the School Board from 1986 to 1993, serving as

chair from 1990 to 1992. He was appointed to the State Council of Higher Education by Gov. Linwood Holton in 1971. He served for eight years.

Melvin Miller is proudest of his work in the 1970s, when he, George Cook, Wiley Mitchell and Ira Robinson sat down in Mitchell's kitchen and drafted a resolution that led to an agreement between the City and ARHA that no public housing in the city would be destroyed unless there was a provision for one-for-one replacement. Though modified somewhat in the 1980s to allow "publicly assisted" units that were not directly public housing, that agreement still underlies the City's housing policy, he said.

Melvin Miller was reappointed to the ARHA board in 2000 and has been chair since 2001. Connie Ring, another ARHA board member, said Miller's strength has been his ability to look at ARHA development projects and come up with a viable way to redevelop neighborhoods. For example, doing the Glebe Park and Bland projects together worked because of the high land value in the Bland neighborhood, which saved city taxpayers money. The combination of replacement public housing with market value housing has made the whole project economically feasible, Ring said. The project was approved on Oct. 18, 2008.

"Except for the determination, skills and perseverance of Melvin, I don't think we would have been able to get the whole project through City Council. Of course Council and other civic leaders contributed a lot to the process, but the one person who was indispensable was Melvin."

Ring also remembers Melvin Miller's contribution to civil rights efforts in years past, and remembers Eula Miller cooking breakfast for some of their gatherings at the Miller home.

Ferdinand Day cited Melvin Miller's time as a spokesman for the Secret Seven, and called him "a trusted friend for a half century. As a civil rights attorney, he inspired and provided courageous leadership to generations in search of justice and equality."

Former School Board member Shirley Tyler said she relied on Melvin Miller for advice and counsel for many years. She appreciated his insights on education, but also on public housing issues. Tyler said she thinks Alexandria's housing policies have been more successful than in other places. "Small clusters give a sense of community," she said. She also cited the importance of residents' "sense that people like Melvin were on their side and looking out for their interests." She believes that scattered site housing has been a positive development.

The Millers had three children, one of whom is deceased. They are proud that their children were educated at Amherst, Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Georgetown, and the George Washington School of Law. All four of their grandchildren live in Alexandria within minutes of their grandparents' home. Their children explain the return to Alexandria after their schooling this way: "We like home."

By Christa Watters
For the Gazette Packet

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Albert Melvin Miller, longtime civic leader and activist, dies at 83

By [Bart Barnes](#) June 9, 2015

Albert Melvin Miller, a lawyer with the Department of Housing and Urban Development and an Alexandria, Va., civic leader and activist who worked on education and affordable-housing issues, died May 10 at a hospital in Alexandria. He was 83.

The cause was a pulmonary embolism, said a daughter, Ericka Miller.

Mr. Miller, who was known as “Al” and “Mel,” was an eight-year member of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia in the 1970s, and a member of the Alexandria Board of Education from 1986 to 1993, serving as chairman from 1990 to 1992.

He was chairman of the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority from 1970 to 1977 and from 2001 to 2012. He was instrumental in the enactment of a regulation requiring a one-for-one replacement for the demolition of any public housing unit.

He retired from HUD in 1997 as assistant to the deputy secretary for management, planning and operation. He had spent 35 years at HUD and at a predecessor agency, the Federal Housing Administration.

Mr. Miller was born in Savannah, Ga., on Nov. 14, 1931. He grew up in Haddonfield, N.J., and in 1952 graduated from what now is St. Augustine’s University in Raleigh, N.C.

He later served 35 years on the board of trustees for St. Augustine’s and became a vocal promoter and supporter of historically black colleges and universities.

He graduated from Howard University law school in 1955 and settled in Alexandria three years later. In the years following the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision holding racial segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional, Mr. Miller became a leader and spokesman for the “Secret Seven,” an African American group advocating for school equality and integration.

His wife since 1957, Eula Mallette Miller, died in 2011. A son, Eric Miller, died in 2005.

Survivors include two children, Marc Miller and Ericka Miller, both of Alexandria; and four grandsons.

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