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~ A Life of Impact ~

The enduring legacy of Rosetta Miller-Perry

By Jackie Hampton and Wiley Henry

NASHVILLE, TN – After receiving more than five hundred local, state, and national honors for her extraordinary contributions to publishing, journalism, civil rights, education, and for her support of economic empowerment within Nashville's African American business community, Mrs. Rosetta (Irvin) Miller-Perry sought only to help others succeed in life.

Miller-Perry was smart, relentless, unyielding, persistent, and unwavering in her pursuit of excellence while reaching the pinnacle of success. She was the preeminent newspaper publisher, entrepreneur, business owner, advocate, and a warrior for justice. On Friday, June 26, she rested from her labor. She was ninety-one.

Though hearts are heavy, Miller-Perry's legacy endures. What she was able to accomplish in her lifetime is etched into the annals of history.

Born in Coraopolis, PA on July 7, 1934, to her parents Anderson Irvin and Mary Hall Irvin, Miller-Perry understood that her life would be dedicated to something greater than herself. The Spirit moved her to reach for the brass ring in life and to help aspirants along the way.

Her journey began in the classroom at McKinley Elementary School, Coraopolis Junior High School, and Coraopolis Senior High School, where she graduated in 1952. She would later matriculate at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and Herzl Community College in Chicago.

In 1955, Miller-Perry enlisted in the United States Navy. But she did not stop there. She went on to work for a man named Adam Bush in the Pentagon and for the Adjutant General's Office in Germany.

In 1956, she graduated from the University of Memphis with a B.S. degree in chemistry and from the John A. Gumpton School of Mortuary Science in 1957 with her D.M.S. In 1958, she attended Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College for nurses training while working at Southern Funeral Home.

While Miller-Perry was pursuing a thorough education, the Civil Rights Movement was teetering on the edge of uncertainty. The Klan was on a war path across the south and hellbent on maintaining the status quo.

Taking a stand for justice, Miller-Perry was now an active participant in the fury that divided the nation. She worked in the trenches alongside giants like Z. Alexander Looby, Reverend Kelly Miller Smith, Curley McGruder, and countless others who risked everything in their pursuit of justice.

Miller-Perry moved to Memphis and worked closely with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., serving first as a clerk typist for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in 1960. She was a field representative and a trusted observer monitoring Civil Rights activities during the Memphis Sanitation Strike in 1968.

Rosetta Miller-Perry, continued on A6

