



Enolia P. McMillan

October 20, 1904 - October 24, 2006

By Nicole Fuller and Kelly BrewingtonSun reportersOctober 25, 2006Enolia P. McMillan, the first female president of the NAACP and an educator whose career spanned 42 years, died of natural causes yesterday at her home in Stevenson. She was 102. Mrs. McMillan, whose father was born a slave, became a teacher in 1927 and quickly became a crusader for equal pay for black teachers and better schools for black students. In 1935, she helped to reactivate the city chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and remained an active force in it for more than 50 years. She played a key role in persuading the NAACP to move its national headquarters from New York to Baltimore in 1986. Kweisi Mfume, former president and CEO of the NAACP and a close friend of the McMillan family, called Mrs. McMillan a "pillar of the civil rights movement." "She was very much the matriarch of the NAACP," he said. "She was a fighter who was relentless in pursuing justice." Mr. Mfume credited Mrs. McMillan and former NAACP Executive Director Benjamin L. Hooks with orchestrating the NAACP's move from New York to Northwest Baltimore. While Mr. Hooks and others helped craft a financial package to initiate the move, it was Mrs. McMillan whose on-the-ground efforts made it a reality, Mr. Mfume said. "It was Mrs. McMillan who went out and sold pies and sold commemorative bricks and held raffles and cajoled the members of that board to think about finally owning a building of their own," he said. The eldest of four children, she was born Oct. 20, 1904, in Willow Grove, Pa., to John Pettigen, who was born a slave in Virginia, and

Elizabeth Fortune Pettigen, a domestic worker. The family moved to Charles County and settled in Baltimore when she was about 8. The family attended Calvary Baptist Church on Garrison Boulevard in West Baltimore, where she, her mother and sister were active in the church's community programs. In 1922, she graduated from Douglass High School in Baltimore. She wanted to be a doctor - a pediatrician because she liked children - but heeding the realities of a black woman's opportunity in that day, she decided to become a teacher, said her eldest granddaughter, Tiffany Beth McMillan. She spent five hours a day commuting from Baltimore to Washington by train to attend Howard University, where she received a bachelor's degree in education in 1927. She began her first teaching job at Denton High School in Caroline County. In 1928, she became a principal in Charles County. In 1933, she earned her master's degree from Columbia University. Her thesis was "The Factors Affecting Secondary Education for Negroes in Maryland Counties." In 1935, she returned to Baltimore to teach. That same year, she played a key role in reactivating the city chapter of the NAACP. Her experience in the schools put her in direct contact with the pernicious effects of segregation. When she worked in Charles County there was only one secondary institution for blacks while there were five high schools for whites even though the population of blacks and whites were about the same, she recalled in a 1986 interview in *The Sun*. The situation was even more unequal because it was difficult for black students to get to their school's remote location. "So we got together and bought a little used yellow school bus and named it Amos," she said. "It gave us fits but it also got out to students for almost 40 miles around. The next year we bought a second bus and by the third year, we were up to having a brand-new bus. By the time I left, we had three buses." On Dec. 26, 1935, she married Betha D. McMillan. They had a son, Betha D. McMillan Jr., in 1970. Her husband died of cancer in 1984 at age 76. Her role as a mother and wife - in which she held lavish holiday dinners complete with roasted turkey and sweet potatoes topped with marshmallows, and ironed and cleaned as most women in her day - didn't slow her activism. "She was a very

independent woman and a feminist and a forerunner in terms of civil rights, said Tiffany Beth McMillan. "But she was so old-fashioned when it came to homemaking ... cooking, and ironing and cleaning." In 1969, Mrs. McMillan was elected president of the Baltimore chapter of the NAACP after she defeated Juanita J. Mitchell, who sought the post after her mother, Lillie M. Jackson, decided to step down after holding the post for 34 years. Mrs. Mitchell's husband, Clarence Mitchell Jr., was director of the NAACP's Washington bureau and the group's Capitol Hill lobbyist. Mrs. McMillan's victory was considered an upset because of the Mitchell-Jackson family's long grip on the local civil rights group. Mrs. McMillan, who was 65 when she assumed the post, said she wanted to reach out to young "black militants" who felt out of the organization's work, according to an article that appeared in The Evening Sun. "I've been a militant all of my life," Mrs. McMillan said in the article, "but I am not extreme." In addition to leading the Baltimore branch and the Maryland state conference of the NAACP, Mrs. McMillan held the title of NAACP national president for many years. The role at the time was largely ceremonial, but Mrs. McMillan wielded a considerable influence over the organization's national policy and its daily operations. A diligent fundraiser, Mrs. McMillan baked peach pies and sold \$1 lapel pins so the NAACP could move its national headquarters from New York to Baltimore. The pins, which stated, "I gave" and "NAACP," were wildly popular and netted the organization \$150,000. Every opportunity, she hawked the pins. Mrs. McMillan, a teacher and administrator in the city schools for 35 years, brought the same sense of activism to that job, successfully lobbying as a teachers union president against a law that allowed "colored" teachers to be paid less than white teachers. Mrs. McMillan, who is listed in the Women's Hall of Fame in the Maryland State Archives, stayed active in civil rights well into her golden years. In 1985, she led a protest against South Africa's apartheid system in front of the country's embassy in Washington. In 1998, she joined NAACP leaders in Atlanta for the group's annual convention. "She was an extremely

effective force at the convention," said Mr. Mfume. "Everybody dropped everything just to say hello to her. No one thought she would make it there at her age, and when she did, no one expected her to be as spry as she was. She was still active, still holding meetings, still giving advice - solicited or unsolicited."She drove until her late 80s, her granddaughter said, and attended church at Calvary until she was 96.Mr. Mfume said he was with the family Friday when loved ones celebrated Mrs. McMillan's birthday. "We were just kind of happy about the fact that she made another year," he said.On the block of 26th Street where the NAACP's Baltimore branch headquarters is located, a street sign reads "Enolia P. McMillan Way." The city headquarters was named after Mrs. McMillan in 2000.NAACP Baltimore branch President Marvin "Doc" Cheatham, who referred to Mrs. McMillan as "Mrs. Mac," had placed a framed photo of her above the archway of the building's main entrance as a reminder to members of her legacy."There has always been pictures of the presidents on the wall, but I just thought her photo belonged in the most important place in that building for everyone who left that building to remember Mrs. Mac," he said yesterday. "She was remarkably strong."In addition to her son and granddaughter, both of Stevenson, Mrs. McMillan is survived by three other grandchildren, Angela McMillan Howell of Yeadon, Pa.; David Betha McMillan of Providence, R.I.; and Sally Camille McMillan of Stevenson.A viewing will be held Sunday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the March Funeral Home West, 4300 Wabash Ave., Baltimore. Services are scheduled for 11 a.m. Monday at Calvary Baptist Church, 3911 Garrison Blvd.

Tribute Wall



“ *Enolia P. McMillan*

October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ *To the family, my deepest condolences. May you cherish her memory. The Bible has words of comfort. At 1 Corinthians 15:26 states, "As the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing." God has promised to do away with death and the pain that it causes. May these words be of comfort to the family.##imported-begin##Sean##imported-end##*

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ My deepest sympathy during your time of sorrow but know that the God of comfort is with you all during this time of tribulation. (2Corinthian 1:3-4) Due to the many unforeseen occurrences that brings tragedy to our lives Jehovah God promises one day soon Death will be no more (Rev 21:3-4) and his son have been given the authority to bring all those in the memorial tombs back to life. John 5:28-29 Just think there will come a time not only will death be no more but Jehovah promises that no one will have to say I'm sick according to Isaiah 33:24. I feel the need to express these words of hope because so many of us today treasure the gift of life and we do all we can to maintain it to hold on to it. That is why it hurts so badly when our loved ones die. With so many of us desiring life today no matter how good or bad it is we still want life here on earth. No one looks forward to that time of death. That is why I am under obligation by the spirit and love of God to share that hope that is in our near future that the righteous shall inherit the earth and reside upon it forever according to Psalms 37: 29 along with the above stated promises on a paradise and peaceful earth. We all can hold true to this everlasting promise because Isaiah states all the words Jehovah have spoken WILL NOT RETURN WITHOUT RESULTS. What a wonderful prospect for our future enlight of the fact that Hebrews 6:18 States of God, it is IMPOSSIBLE for him to lie.##imported-begin##Carter##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Thank You, Thank You May God Forever Keep You in his care##imported-begin##Ron Rheubottom##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ To The Family: Mrs.McMillan Was A Great Lady And A Great Leader.She Surely Will Be Missed. Our Prayers Are With You##imported-begin##William & Regina Randall##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ THANK YOU FOR THE GOOD FIGHT. MAY YOUR YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS BE COMFORTED.##imported-begin##Anthony Ferrell##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Wishing you comfort in your time of sorrow. We love you very much and will keep you all in our prayers. The Scott, Norman and Miller Families of Jefferson and Demopolis, Alabama.##imported-begin##Virginia Norman##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ You have our deepest sympathy for the lost of your family member and our honorary "Kappa Chapter" sorority member - Soror Enolia McMillian##imported-begin##Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc.##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Mrs. McMillan exemplified the virtuous woman that is described in Proverbs 31. She established a legacy of excellence, education and independence. Her initiative and drive should be emulated by the family and friends that were blessed to know her. My initial contact with Mrs. McMillan took place when I met her in my early teens as a participant in the NAACP ACT-SO competition. I am delighted to have made her acquaintance at such an impressionable age during my formative years.##imported-begin##Evangelist Amy Neal##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ A strong and beautiful black woman.What a legacy she has left for us.I admired Mrs. McMillan so much.I remember her as vice principal at Clifton Park Jr. High.She was strong , proud and an excellent role model for us black females.I feel honored that our paths have crossed no matter how brief.God bless you and rest in peace my sister.You fought a good fight!!!##imported-begin##Ruth McCormick##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ I would to send my condelscones out to the family. I remember when I first met this young lady at one of the NAACP meeting. We would have a lot of different conversions about businesses in Maryland. I would truly miss my dear friend. May God Continue to Bless Each And Every Person. Keep Your Trust In The Lord And He Would Work It Out For You. God Bless You, Drucilla##imported-begin##Drucilla P. Hollie##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ *What a Wonderful Woman and What Great legacy !To The Family ,You Have Our Deepest Heartfelt Sympathy. Denise McNeil, Carl Jackson &Elsie Cornish.##imported-begin##Denise McNeil##imported-end##*

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ *I would like to extend my condolences to the family of Mrs McMillan.Death is an enemy and causes much grief and pain.The Bible admonishes us to put faith in Jesus and the resurrection hope.John 5:28,29.##imported-begin##ELAINE##imported-end##*

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM