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James R. Miller Jr., federal judge in Baltimore

Former state delegate spent 15 years on the District Court bench

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Judge Roszel C. Thomsen (left) shakes the hand of Judge James R. Miller Jr. after he was sworn in. Judge Miller, who died in June, was a judge in Baltimore for 15 years. (George H. Cook, Baltimore Sun / November 17, 1970)

By Chris Kaltenbach, The Baltimore Sun

5:41 p.m. EDT, July 1, 2014

James Rogers Miller Jr., a former state delegate from Montgomery County who spent 15 years as a federal district judge in Baltimore, died of congestive heart failure June 25 at HeartFields Assisted Living at Easton. He was 83.

"Judge Miller was an outstanding and brilliant jurist," said U.S. District Judge Ellen L. Hollander, who clerked for Judge Miller in the 1970s. "He tirelessly and skillfully pursued the just resolution of every case. He had an unwavering commitment to the rule of law and an uncompromising integrity. He was a guiding force in our professional lives."

Appointed to the bench by **President Richard M. Nixon** in 1970, Judge Miller presided over a number of significant cases. In 1972, he ruled against officials looking to build an eight-lane highway through Baltimore's Leakin Park, ordering them to conduct new public hearings and prepare a more complete environmental impact statement. In 1984, he ruled that state officials were within their rights when they altered the pension program for 80,000 public employees and teachers.

He also presided over the trial of the killer of Baltimore police Detective Marcellus Ward, who was shot in 1984 while working undercover and negotiating a drug buy. Detective Ward was wearing a wire at the time, and the recording made during his shooting was played during the trial. The case left a profound mark on all concerned, including Judge Miller.

"I witnessed my father fighting back tears when recalling this trial for an oral history of the court," said his

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son, Andrew C. Miller of Preston in **Caroline County**.

A native of Sandy Spring in **Montgomery County** and an alumnus of the Landon School in **Bethesda**, Judge Miller earned a bachelor's degree from **Wesleyan University** in 1953. Two years later, he received his law degree from Georgetown University.

The same year he earned his law degree, Judge Miller joined his father and stepmother, James and Lee Miller, in private practice in Rockville. While a member of the firm that came to be known as Miller, Miller & Canby, he began his long career of public service, including stints as president of the Rockville Chamber of Commerce, president of the Bar Association of Montgomery County and as a member of the Governor's Commission on Reorganization of the Government of the State of Maryland.

He also chaired the Montgomery County Republican Central Committee and, in 1968, worked in the vice presidential campaign of Maryland Gov. Spiro T. Agnew; two years earlier, he had served as the Montgomery County chair for Mr. Agnew's successful gubernatorial campaign.

"He always thought it was important to be of public service, if possible," said his son.

Judge Miller served a single term in the **Maryland House of Delegates**, from 1962 to 1966. He decided against seeking a second term, his son said, because "he was a believer in citizen legislators, not professional government employees. He believed that you served the public, and then you left."

When Judge Miller was sworn in as a federal judge in November 1970, his father, James R. Miller Sr., and former law partner William M. Canby formally presented him with his judicial robes.

Judge Miller, who lived in **Roland Park** for much of his time on the bench, retired in December 1986 and moved to Bozman on Maryland's Eastern Shore. In 1991, he rejoined Miller, Miller & Canby as a counselor and adviser to the firm. He also remained active as an arbitrator and mediator on the national level, often asked to rule on complicated multimillion-dollar business disputes.

"He had a power of concentration that would just give you a headache to watch," said Patrick McKeever, a partner at Miller, Miller & Canby whose association with Judge Miller goes back nearly 50 years. "He could bear down on complexity and make it as clear as gin. He was really quite a guy."

Shortly after the death of his wife, the former Jo Anne Trice, in August 2006, Judge Miller left the firm and returned to his home in **St. Michaels**, as well as a second home in Boca Grande, Fla. In the ensuing years, he spent much of his time traveling and being with his family.

A memorial service is set for 11:30 a.m. July 15 at Bozman United Methodist Church, 9788 Bozman-Neavitt Road in Bozman, Talbot County.

In addition to his son, Judge Miller is survived by another son, James R. Miller III of **Ellicott City**, and two daughters, Merrie H. Delauder of Easton and Katherine T.M. Goldberg of **Greenwich**, Conn. He is also survived by his companion of more than seven years, Patricia L. Chapman of Boca Grande and Doylestown, Pa., and a brother, Thomas C. Miller of Vero Beach, Fla., as well as 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

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