

Margaret Delaney Miller, VA
1978-1980
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Margaret Townley Delaney Miller of Virginia was a pioneer in the national human care licensing and regulatory field and a trailblazer for women's rights. Miller served from 1976-78 as the association's first president, and as Secretary from 1978-79, Treasurer from 1987-1988 and Immediate Past Treasurer in 1989.

Miller, who began her professional career as a social worker in Virginia, became the first woman to serve as Director of the Division of Licensing in the Virginia Department of Welfare, with responsibility for administering Virginia's child day care and children's residential facility licensing programs. While in this position, she bravely battled opponents in advocating for stronger State child care regulations and, ultimately, prevailed. Margaret initiated a class action suit against the Commonwealth of Virginia, seeking equal pay for women department heads, arguing it was unfair that women were earning less than men department heads were being paid. She won the suit retroactively in a major victory for equal rights for women in Virginia.

Miller retired from the Department on June 1, 1979 after more than 30 years of distinguished public service, and devoted a good portion of her newfound leisure time doing volunteer work for NARA and her church in Virginia. She had a life-long love for music and served as organist at several

Richmond area churches. Miller enjoyed entertaining her family and friends with her piano playing and also was active in the leadership of Interfaith Services of Henrico County and served as president of Region IX of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. A founding member of the Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children (VAEYC), Margaret received numerous tributes throughout her distinguished career, including the VACH Service to Children Award, the Commonwealth of Virginia Commissioner's Award and the NARA President's Award.

In his eulogy, the Rev. Tom Holliday of Trinity Episcopal Church, remembered Miller as "a true lady of the old school, sophisticated, elegant, and largely self-assured. I say largely self-assured because she had about her a vulnerability, which she revealed only to those she trusted, that was endearing for a woman who could muster such power, who had achieved so much and who contributed so much to the Church, to her community and indeed to the State of Virginia ... I allude to Margaret's highly developed sense of propriety, dignity and deportment. However, when it came to social consciousness, church work and politics, Margaret could only be described as a progressive leader. She led by example and action in demonstrating the important to society of recognizing, affirming and utilizing all the gifts which all women and men have to offer ... "

Miller was among a small and select group of disciples of the late Norris E. Class (KS), a NARA founder who was generally regarded as the seminal authority on human care licensing in America. The original

group also included NARA founder Edna Hughes (TN), Gwen Morgan (MA) and Lela B. Costin (IL), as well as NARA charter member and former NARA President David J. Beard (TX) and the Rev. Rolland C. Gerhart, Jr. (VT). Together, they helped devise, record and teach the theory, philosophy and practice that ultimately defined the field of human care regulatory administration.

Miller was instrumental in planning the original licensing institutes sponsored by Tulane University in the early 1970s. In the October 1978 issue of the association's licensing newsletter, she wrote, "I think back to the early licensing institutes at Tulane, and the contracts they afforded us with our colleagues in other states. Some of us dreamed that these would lead to an association dedicated to professional growth in regulatory administration. In 1976, we decided to give reality to our fantasy and established the Association for Regulatory Administration (a predecessor of NARA) ...

"I believe [the association's] greatest achievement has been to give us a feeling of professional identity ... The sense of knowing that others share our concerns, are facing similar problems, are looking for solutions, and sometimes have found solutions to share, has sharpened our awareness of our own pro-fessionalism and turned a sort of spotlight on our own skills. Regulatory activities, once largely of interest only within each State's boundaries, have taken on a larger scope, a greater professionalism because of ARA ... "

David Beard, a long-time colleague and friend of Margaret's, pointed to Miller's "strength and ability to accommodate more personal painful experiences." Beard said when she lost her sister, Margaret "stepped in and became the mother to her sister's only child," Townley, who was then an adult. He added, "Margaret's husband shared her love and affection. She often referred to him in everyday con-versations. When he lost his eyesight, she was his major supporter, serving as his 'eyes.' Sadly and ironically, Margaret later developed macular degeneration and lost her sight. But she did not allow that condition to slow her down and taught herself to play the piano by ear." Beard said Miller, in her many years as Director of Licensing in Virginia, "bravely faced disappointments in many attempts to ... promote and improve child care regulations, and, resorting to patience and other approaches, later realized some of her dreams."

I first met Margaret at the Tulane licensing institutes. She was a serious and proper woman whom her family and friends referred to affectionately as "Sister." Margaret possessed all of the best qualities of a genteel Southern lady. Yet, she was a fierce advocate who confronted and survived many professional challenges to quality human care licensing during her career and a visionary who pursued creation of a professional licensing association with determination and vigor. Margaret also had a devilish side to her personality and could enjoy an off-color remark or a practical joke. She even had a beer keg per-manently installed in the kitchen of her family homestead. Over the years, I came to know, love and respect Margaret for her strength of character, commitment, intellect, courage, charm and sense of humor. She was a giant in NARA and in the human care regulatory movement in North America. Margaret will be sorely missed.

NARA celebrated its 25th anniversary in Scottsdale, Arizona, by honoring the organization's founders, many of whom had passed away by then. Margaret was accompanied by her niece, Townley Cole, whom

she considered to be her daughter. In an address at the NARA luncheon, Miller gave a moving and humorous account of the history of NARA and her role in the human care regulatory movement. She received a standing ovation. With Miller's death, only three of the original nine founders of NARA remain, Anne L. Leatherman of Texas; Gwen Morgan of Massachusetts; and George Robinson of California.

In a recent interview, Townley Cole said Margaret "is still sadly missed." She said Margaret's "apartment in our home is still intact, just as she had left it, and my children and I continue to talk about visiting 'Sister's place.'"

Miller was born in Richmond, Virginia to Hortense Watkins and John H. Delaney. She attended the prestigious Fox Elementary School in Richmond, graduated from the College of William and Mary and later earned a Master's degree in Social Work from the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).

Margaret was preceded in death by, her husband of 52 years, Fredrick W. ("Tiny") Miller; her sister, Nancy Delaney Blume; her brother, John J. Delaney, Jr.; and a special nephew, Malcolm W. Cole. She leaves Townley Cole and her children, Mira, Andrew and AJ Cole; Townley's granddaughter, Aiyana; three nieces and a nephew; her sister-in-law; and a host of friends whose lives she touched profoundly. A memorial service was held on June 10 at Trinity Episcopal Church in Highland Springs, Virginia.