

Family Remarks for the Celebration of Life Service for George Miller

Lee Ellen Coffey, daughter of George and Louise

Thanks to each and every one of you for being here in this amazing new facility as we gather to celebrate the wonderful life of George Miller — known as George to most, Dr. Miller to his students, Brown to his mother, Dad to Cecily, and Terry, and Michele and me, and Grandpa or Papa to his grandchildren.

A variety of names but then he had a wide variety of experiences in his 88 years.

He grew up living in a several cities throughout the south as he and his parents moved for his father's career working for the Southern Railway.

He did well in school — usually. He started off really well going his first day of school to kindergarten and coming home that day in first grade. With his powerful mind, he graduated from high school early and finished his engineering degree quickly too. While at Duke he spent a great deal of time playing baritone sax in dance bands on weekends. He enjoyed it immensely but that was one period in his life when his grades weren't exactly on par with his intelligence level. It did almost lead to an even different career path as he was invited to join the Tommy Dorsey Band. He was unable to, due to his service in the Navy.

After the Navy he pursued degrees sort of a 180 from engineering, leading him into the education field. He did end up with degrees from some notable universities. Throw in the colleges of his grandchildren and he had quite a collection of college t-shirts!

His education career path also led him to meet the amazing woman he married. He was teaching math at Armstrong Junior college in Savannah, Georgia and she was in his class the fall of 1947. He reported her first words to him were "I don't have my homework. I left it in my boyfriend's car." He managed to get her to change cars, and rather quickly won her heart. They married the fall of 1948.

Family was important. Cecily and Terry arrived in the early 50's, then about 10 years later they repeated the process with me then Michele. Dad had continued serving in the Naval Reserves, so during his 2 weeks of duty in different locations each summer, he would do his Navy work and we would vacation.

He loved teaching, and was quite proud of the impact he had on so many students during his 54 years. While most students realize and appreciate the efforts of their teachers later, being recognized by students at the time means a lot. Students from Druid Hills High School in Atlanta Georgia, and students at ONU each dedicated one of their yearbooks to their teacher and mentor.

The family moved to Ada in 1960. Turns out being a professor in a small college town was perfect for balancing work and family and recreational pursuits.

His teaching could definitely be considered a family affair. Think back to before internet, before computers and printers, even before collating copiers. Turns out, WE were the collators. Dad would have his finals run off, bringing home the stacks of individual pages, for the kids to assemble and staple. Finals often just took a circle of the dining room table, not too bad. Some of the lengthy supplemental reading handouts caused a circle of piles around the table and the family room. And the Faculty Handbook — well, that one was table, family room and living room. To motivate the troops we were told it was an honor to be asked to prepare this handbook. Hmm. But it got done, and was done well.

Teachers give homework, and of course have their own work to do at home. Michele remembers sitting beside Dad as he graded papers. He would write the number of points beside each item on the page, and she would come up with the page total. He of course would already know the total.

He could add things SO quickly. These past few years the game of choice was double dominoes. If you ever had a whole bunch of tiles left, you could whine and moan about the huge number it was going to be, pass the tiles to Papa, and he would give you the total really quickly. Pretty amazing.

Playing games was always important in our family, and fun. We played lots of card games growing up, usually Hearts or Spades. Age was not a reason to be cut any slack, so you learned quickly. He was patient as you learned, a true educator. He would play outside too, building castles at the beach, throwing balls or whatever the kids wanted. In fact some of Terry's friends would come over and if Terry couldn't play, they would ask if Mr. Miller could come out and play.

Dad liked to play sports himself as well. Tennis was great in the summer, winter was handball and racquetball. Turns out those walls were not necessarily a great thing, as there were a number of stitches received after battling in those rooms in King Horn.

Football — Dad liked football, and for many years was the PA announcer at home ONU football games. Way back in his younger, much, much thinner days, he had tried out for the football team. That was when you had to play both offense and defense. Without much meat on his 6-3 frame, he later admitted the kindest thing the coach ever did was cut him.

He did have better luck with softball, playing first base in the softball leagues at ONU and for the Methodist Church for years.

And bowling, well that was a really good sport for him. So many trophies and plaques and patches — and more importantly friends and community connections.

Bowling and softball success can be aided by having a little extra weight behind your swing; good cooking for many, many years certainly helped provide that, as did his sweet tooth.

Desserts were the highlight of each meal, and over the years they increased in number. It wasn't just ice cream, but it would be ice cream and cookies, and a piece of candy or fudge. My kids decided they also wanted to be able to "Pull a Papa" and have multiple desserts!

In honor of Dad and his love of community and his love for this church and his love of desserts, we'll gather downstairs for cookies after this service.

So I'll wrap up my stories, and we look forward to hearing your stories and remembrances of this man of many talents with so many varied experiences in his life.

The hymn we will sing shortly was one of my dad's favorites. He even did a sermon based on it once during a stint as lay leader. Focus on the words as you sing — may they comfort you. The chorus goes, "I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free for His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me."

From myself, my siblings, and our mother, THANK YOU for your support over the years as they faced changes and challenges.

What a difficult transition to shift from active independence, hopping in the car to go whenever, wherever, to having a different set of wheels. And not remembering things is just plain old frightening. Some changes could have perhaps been handled more gracefully. BUT, that doesn't take away from the many, MANY wonderful years as teacher, friend, devoted father, loving husband.

Every day, he thanked his God. He thanked his wife of 66 years and expressed his appreciation for her help and for their life together. Very shortly before Dad died, he and Mom talked on the phone. And they ended the conversation sharing "I love you's." How wonderful.

We thank you in advance for supporting our mother as she adjusts to her new version of normal.

So for Dr. Miller, George, Brown, Papa, Grandpa and all his other names, for my father, we are grateful he is now with OUR father in heaven, where there are no wheelchairs. We will miss him, but he is healed, he is whole, he is singing, he is happy, he is free.

Obituary

Dr. George Brown Miller, Jr, 88, passed away Sunday March 1, 2015. He was born in Athens, Georgia to Helen and George Brown Miller.

He attended Duke and Georgia Tech to study aeronautical engineering, which led to service in the Navy during WWII. He then pursued a lengthy career in education, with advanced degrees from Emory and the University of Georgia. Dr. Miller taught for a total of 54 years, proudly impacting many students' lives during the years. He joined the faculty and staff of Ohio Northern University in 1960, serving most of his ONU years in the Education Department training future generations of teachers. He had a variety of roles outside the classroom such as being the announcer for home football games and refereeing softball and volleyball games. He was also involved in various church and community activities. Music brought joy throughout his life in a variety of ways--playing in swing bands during college, singing in the church choir, and appreciating the wonders of classical music from around the world via internet radio. Trains ("real" trains) fascinated him, and he served as a "real" engineer on the historical Toledo, Lake Erie and Western Railway for a number of summers.

Dr. Miller is survived by his loving and devoted wife of 66 years, Louise Terrace Miller, and their children Cecily Crider McCluer of Lima, Terry Miller of Edgewater, FL, Lee Ellen Coffey of Raleigh, NC, and Michele Mosley of Cincinnati. He was proud of his seven grandchildren as well.

A celebration of Dr. Miller's life will be held Friday, March 6th at 2:00 at the Ada First United Methodist Church with a time of gathering to follow the service. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to O.N.U. for the Miller Scholarship Fund, 525 South Main, Ada, Ohio 45810. This Scholarship Fund will aid education students at Ohio Northern University.