

Milton Miller: Father to, soul of Detroit law firm

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BY JOE ROSSITER

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As far as Milton (Jack) Miller was concerned, retirement was highly overrated.

Which is precisely why, at age 94, he continued to drive to his downtown Detroit office each day to attend to official matters at the law firm he helped start, Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn.

Mr. Miller, a respected business and matrimonial lawyer and one of the founding partners in the company, died of pancreatic cancer Tuesday at his home in Franklin.

"Jack was the heart and soul of our firm and the fierce protector of its culture," said chairman Alan S. Schwartz. "He treated us all as his children and the firm as his family. We would not be the firm we've become had we not had Jack as our leader."

Headquartered in the First National Building in Detroit since 1948 when Mr. Miller and Jason Honigman opened for business, the firm employs more than 220 attorneys.

Primarily a business lawyer, dealing in corporate and real estate transactions, Mr. Miller also headed the firm's matrimonial practice and represented several high-profile clients in their divorce cases, including Henry Ford II in his divorce from Christina Ford in 1980.

Although he never formally retired, Mr. Miller stopped practicing law several years ago. Nevertheless, he was actively involved in the daily operations, dispensing legal advice and as a lifetime board member with the firm.

"He was bigger than life," said his son, Dr. Doug Miller. "Family meant more to him than anything. He treated everyone with dignity and respect and touched people's lives in ways unimaginable."

Born in Baltimore, Mr. Miller grew up in Detroit and graduated from Central High School, where he met his future wife, Jeanette Rabinowitz. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan in 1933 and his law degree two years later from U-M.

An enthusiastic tennis player known for his aggressiveness, Mr. Miller was still competing in matches at the local racket clubs up until the time of his death.

In addition to his wife and son, survivors include another son, Fred Miller; a daughter, Daphna Feldman; nine grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services are at noon today at Ira Kaufman Chapel, 18325 W. Nine Mile Road, Southfield. Burial will be in Beth El Memorial Park in Livonia.

Contact **JOE ROSSITER** at 313-222-6594 or [jrossiter@freepress.com](mailto:jrossiter@freepress.com).

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