

OBITUARIES

Floyd W. Alston; led school board

By Vernon Clark

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Floyd W. Alston, 86, a businessman and a former president of the Philadelphia Board of Education who played a key role in the development of many businesses and more than 1,000 single-family homes in North Central Philadelphia, died Monday, Sept. 24, of vasculitis at Chestnut Hill Hospital.

Mr. Alston, who also had been a manager for the Philadelphia Housing Authority, was the founder and chief executive of Beech Interplex, later known as Beech Corp., a community development corporation in the 1500 block of Cecil B. Moore Avenue in North Philadelphia.

Under his leadership, from its founding 1990 until his retirement in 2005, Beech Corp. built thousands of homes and oversaw more than \$1 billion in development in North Philadelphia, said Ken Scott, current president and chief executive of the corporation.

Scott said Mr. Alston helped develop the View, a complex on Broad Street at Cecil B. Moore Avenue that includes stores, the Pearl movie complex, and apartments for Temple University students.

"He was a mentor to me and thousands of people," Scott said. "That was what was special about him."

Mr. Alston's wife of 62 years, Marilyn Baker Alston, said the most important thing in his life was helping people.

"Service was his middle name," she said.

Mr. Alston was appointed to the Philadelphia Board of Education by Mayor W. Wilson Goode Sr. in 1989. He served on the board through 1999, and was elected president in 1994 and reelected in 1996. He had served as vice president in 1992 and 1993.

"Floyd Alston was a great man and a really great guy," Mayor Nutter said. "You couldn't find a nicer man committed to making Philadelphia a better place, especially for our children."

Before joining the school board, Mr. Alston was a manager of housing developments for the Philadelphia Housing Authority. Mr. Alston was the manager of the Richard Allen and Raymond Rosen housing developments in North Philadelphia and the Abbottsford Homes in East Falls.

"North Philadelphia was really his passion," said his wife. "He really enjoyed it. He enjoyed working in housing."

Floyd William Alston was born Oct. 23, 1925, the son of Goldie Benton Alston and Isaac Alston. He was raised in North Philadelphia and was a graduate of Northeast Philadelphia High School.

Mr. Alston earned a bache-

lor's degree in business administration from Temple University in 1970.

He joined the Marine Corps in 1943 and was trained at Montford Point, a segregated, substandard camp for black recruits near Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Mr. Alston, a sergeant, served through 1946 in the South Pacific at Saipan, Guam, and the Marshall Islands. He served a second term in the Marines from 1950 to 1952 in Korea.

On June 27, Mr. Alston was among 402 black Marines from Montford Point who were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal — the nation's highest civilian honor — at the Capitol in Washington for their dedication during World War II despite being segregated.

His wife said that receiving the Gold Medal was a moving experience for Mr. Alston. She described the award as "the cherry on top" of his career.

He was a member of Grace Baptist Church of Germantown for 30 years. He previously attended Jones Memorial Baptist Church.

Mr. Alston served on the boards of several organizations, including Frontiers International, a civic service leadership organization for African American youth and the African American Museum in Philadelphia.

He was a member of the board of the Avenue of the Arts and several other organizations and institutions. Mr.

Alston was also the chairman of the Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz and Performing Arts.

He also was the founder and board member of Tucker House, a 180-bed nursing and rehabilitation center at 10th and Wallace Streets.

In 1990, Mr. Alston received a \$25 million grant from the William Penn Foundation to "meet the challenge" of revitalizing part of North Philadelphia and the Cecil B. Moore Avenue corridor, his wife said.

That grant led to the founding of Beech Interplex.

City Council President Darrell L. Clarke hailed Mr. Alston as a force for change in North Philadelphia.

"I knew Floyd for more than 30 years and counted him as a mentor and a trusted friend. ... He was a visionary community leader in North Philadelphia and will be greatly missed," Clarke said.

In addition to his wife, Mr. Alston is survived by a son, Craig E.S.; a daughter, Suzanne Hodges; and two grandchildren.

A viewing will be held Friday, Sept. 28, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Grace Baptist Church, 25 W. Johnson St. A second viewing will be held Saturday, Sept. 29, at the church from 8 to 10 a.m., followed by a funeral. Burial will be at Mount Lawn Cemetery in Sharon Hill.

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