



Richard Allen McElrath Sr.

September 23, 1942 - March 18, 2020

Richard's Story

Charlotte - The Honorable Richard Allen McElrath, Sr., 77, former elected official, community activist, and long-time resident of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C., died Wednesday, the 18th of March at Northlake House.

Born on September 23, 1942 in Hempstead, Long Island, NY, Richard was the third of four children born to Mary Lucille and Charles Henry McElrath. He received his formal education in Nassau County and graduated from Hempstead High School with a football scholarship to Winston-Salem State University in Winston-Salem, N.C.

After earning a B.A. degree in Education from WSSU, Richard re-located to Charlotte, N.C. While completing his student teaching in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System, Richard met and fell in love with a fellow educator who would become his beloved wife of 53-years, Mrs. Jacqueline B. McElrath. The couple settled down, raised a family, and enjoyed retirement in the CLT-area throughout his life. Richard further achieved his education goals by receiving a master's degree in Education Administration, and a master teacher certificate from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

During his CMS career, Richard, a.k.a. "Mr. Mack" or "Coach Mack", taught math, shop and drama, along with coaching football, basketball, baseball, track and soccer as an athletic director.

In 2009, Richard was elected to represent District 2 on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education.

Throughout his celebrated journey in education, Richard's knowledge and insight were invariably solicited by local and national media, including NPR in 2007. He was honored with several awards including North Carolina's prestigious Order of the Long Leaf Pine award, as well as being inducted into the NAACP's Hall of Fame.

Together with being a member of the Mecklenburg Citizens for Public Education, Richard's commitment to serve his community compelled him to found the following organizations: People United for Education, the West Side Environmental Coalition, and the Mixed Income Housing Coalition. He also served on the board of directors for Clean Water for North Carolina, and was an active member of the Black Political Caucus of Charlotte, as well as The Tuesday Morning Breakfast Forum.

A member of the Mu Epsilon Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., in his spare time, Richard was an avid fisherman, photographer and dog lover, who also enjoyed wood working, gardening, and playing games like cards, billiards, ping-pong, scrabble, and computer backgammon.

Along with his wife Jackie, Richard is survived by his son Richard Allen McElrath, Jr.; daughter Lori McElrath; granddaughter Jada McElrath; grandson Reshard McElrath; siblings Gloria Riley, Natheley McElrath, Cecil Felton, Kevin Felton, and Barbara Felton; nephews Dwayne Riley and Charles McElrath, Jr. (Rhonda McElrath); grand-nephews Khalil Jones and Corbin McElrath; and grand-nieces Surya Jones and Chelcie McElrath. He was predeceased by his brother Charles McElrath, Sr.; brother David Felton; and niece Mary "Richie" McElrath-Jones.

Cemetery Details

Private

Tribute Wall



“ A.E. Grier & Sons Funeral and Cremation, LLC. created a Tribute Video in memory of Richard Allen McElrath Sr.



A.E. Grier & Sons Funeral and Cremation, LLC. - March 26, 2020 at 05:48 PM

LM

Fall 1982, I was 12, from a small Pennsylvania town, fresh to the city. It was culture shock, and I HATED A.G.!! But, for about 6 months, I did enjoy math class because of this man. He was my first favorite teacher in N.C. I could just tell he was an enlightened man, not like any other adults I had met at A.G. He had a mouse, left from an experiment, living in the classroom, and he let me have it! I had NO friends, no pets either, and that really meant a lot to me. We moved to South Blvd and I went to Smith, then Olympic, but I never EVER forgot Mr Mack and his kindness. Some teachers never do learn the magic needed to reach young students, but apparently, he was born with that magic. Few people actually do leave the world around them, better that they found it, but he did more than any 50 men! May we meet again over yonder Mr Mack...

Lee Mintzer - December 10, 2023 at 02:37 PM

AM

“ Family of Mr. Mack, he touched & motivated so many young lives. He took me under his wing as an assistant in his math classes and as the statistician for soccer and basketball. I remember many car rides to games in his maroon car. We'd usually stop by the Pop Shop to get a treat. You were by far my favorite teacher. Loved seeing the video of days through his life.
RIP - Ann Hartman Masi

Ann Masi - April 03, 2020 at 01:29 PM

MM

“ I AM SO SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT THE PASSING OF MR. MACK, MY PRAYERS AND CONDOLENCES ARE WITH THE FAMILY IN THEIR LOSS. MR MACK USED TO BE A TEACHER OF MINE WHEN I WAS AT A.G. JUNIOR HIGH HERE IN CHARLOTTE. I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT MR. MACK WAS SUCH A NICE PERSON WITH A SWEET DISPOSITION AND HE WAS A GREAT TEACHER TO HIS STUDENTS WHOM HE TAUGHT WELL! MAY THE PEACE OF GOD BE WITH EACH MEMBER OF HIS FAMILY AND MAY HIS LOVE WRAP AROUND YOUR HEARTS. GOD BLESS YOU!

MARILYN METZ - March 30, 2020 at 07:54 PM

NR

“ Truly will be missed. Prayers to the family.

Novel Russell-Ratchford - March 28, 2020 at 04:11 PM

CN

“ I will be forever grateful to Coach Mac for giving my daughter the encouragement she needed as an insecure 7th grader. We first met him at A.G. Middle School at an orientation for new students. She told him she was "not very good at math." He countered immediately with - "who told you that?" That began a school year where, for the first time, she felt like someone explained math to her in a way she could understand. She kept her notes from his class and referred to them when she got to Myers Park High School and needed them for review in her math classes! Fast forward to today as a college graduate and employee of a corporation where she uses her math skills every day. What better compliment to an educator? He was also a wonderful role model and a true gentleman. The world needs more Coach Macs.
We send our condolences,
Connie and Blake Nowlin

Connie Nowlin - March 28, 2020 at 03:54 PM

NR

“ So sorry to hear about the death of Richard. A man who had a vision. To his family, my prayers are with you.

Novel Russell-Ratchford - March 27, 2020 at 05:11 PM

CC

“ Our sincere condolences to McElrath and Felton Family. He will be missed. We love you all and praying for healing during this time.
The Codio

Camelia Codio - March 25, 2020 at 07:58 PM



“ I am forever grateful that Richard spent time with me when I was in my earliest days on the School Board. He influenced the way I saw things, and he helped me to see the bigger picture. I was so pleased to nominate him for appointment to School Board, and even though he did not win at that time, he did in the general election, and was a valuable member. Though some thought he could be stubborn (and he could be!), he advocated fiercely for students. In many ways he was ahead of his time the way he insisted on access to quality education regardless of zip code or setting (something we are ALL dealing with now), and his insistence that the Board should leverage its voice to push for equity/equality in the greater community - particularly with regard to segregated housing patterns. I know the fish are biting where you are....
Trent Merchant

Trent Merchant - March 25, 2020 at 04:12 PM



“ 41 files added to the album LifeTributes



A.E. Grier & Sons Funeral and Cremation, LLC. - March 25, 2020 at 02:32 PM

CN

“ Rip Mr Mac I always remember how u we're good to me and my class mates til this day I thank u for being hard on me I thank u for it rest on my teacher Ag bulldogs

carla nicholson - March 25, 2020 at 01:03 PM

AM

“ One of *THE ABSOLUTE BEST* educators *EVER!* Mr. Mac encouraged me to win, even after a failure! We were so blessed to have Mr. Mac at A.G.! The epitome of *EFFECTIVE* tough love, that poured his heart into us! Mr. Mac was more than our teacher, he was also like a parent we loved and respected, as he'd have it no other way stepping into his classroom. Thank you for *EVERYTHING* you've done for me! Rest well, our *GIANT!*

Antoine Massey - March 25, 2020 at 12:05 PM

CF

“ Mr. Mack praying for your family during this difficult time. You made a difference in childrens life in which you will always be remembered for. Rest In Peace 🙏🙏🙏
Charvetta F Ford

Charvetta Ford - March 25, 2020 at 08:18 AM

MK

“ Richard was an outstanding educator, affordable housing advocate, member of our community and friend. His passion, commitment and deep caring for people were evident in all the things he has done throughout his life. His voice and presence is a loss for us and will be greatly missed.
Thank you Richard for all you have done. Thank you Jackie for sharing him with us.
Sincerely, Mary Klenz

Mary Klenz - March 24, 2020 at 04:29 PM

BA

“ *Richard McElrath was a fine man and dedicated public school educator as well as an advocate for all children, regardless of zip code. I had the pleasure of working with him as a fellow teacher, coach, and public schools advocate. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family at this difficult time.*

Sincerely,
Bill Anderson

Bill Anderson - March 24, 2020 at 11:06 AM

VS

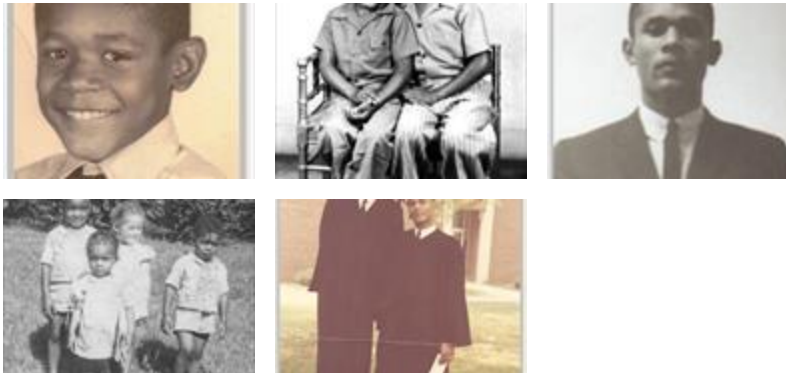
Richard used to help me with our geometry assignments in high school. I am happy to hear he led such a wonderful life and was loved by so many!

Sincerely,
Vivian Beckett HHS class of '62.

Vivian Beckett Scott - May 22, 2024 at 11:02 AM



“ *42 files added to the album Memories Album*



A.E. Grier & Sons Funeral and Cremation, LLC. - March 23, 2020 at 04:17 PM