

Alberta Muirhead: Dearborn business owner also known for volunteer work

By **JOE ROSSITER**

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Though diminutive in stature, Alberta Muirhead was considered a giant in local philanthropic circles and a force to be reckoned with in the business world.

Mrs. Muirhead, who together with her husband owned and managed the landmark Muirhead's department store in Dearborn for more than 40 years, died Friday at Oakwood Hospital in Dearborn. The Dearborn resident was 91. Located at the corner of Military Street and Michigan Avenue, Muirhead's evolved from selling toys to selling baby furniture and infant clothing to selling a full line of apparel for men, women and children.

In describing her normal workday to a Free Press reporter in 1986, Mrs. Muirhead said she couldn't count the number of hours she worked each day. "I'm like the light switch," she explained. "When the store opens, I'm on. When it closes, I'm off."

Born Alberta Blue near Hamilton, Ontario, she moved to Detroit with her family and graduated from Mackenzie High School.

After receiving a degree from Detroit Business College, she met her future husband, John Muirhead, a lawyer, while working a clerical job in his firm. The couple married in 1944.

"She was a vivacious woman who did many wonderful things for so many people," said Mary Jane Dapprich, an employee at the store since Day 1 and a lifetime friend of Mrs. Muirhead. "In all my life, I've never met such a giving person. Her heart and her arms were always open to everyone."

After the death of her husband in 1983, Mrs. Muirhead managed the store by herself until it closed in February 1990. The building is now part of the Oakwood Healthcare System.

Although the couple had no children, Mrs. Muirhead considered the hundreds of students she employed over the years part of her family.

Her volunteer work included serving as director of the Dearborn Chamber of

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Commerce and serving on the West Dearborn Downtown Development Authority; she also was a board member of Oakwood Hospital.

She also did fund-raising for the Dearborn Animal Shelter and the Michigan Humane Society.

The funeral service is at 11:30 a.m. today at the Howe-Peterson Funeral Home, 22546 Michigan Ave., Dearborn.

Burial will be in Woodlawn Cemetery in Detroit.

Contact Joe Rossiter: 313-222-6594 or jrossiter@freepress.com



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