

Fritz Carl Zeller Jr.

Washington public relations executive and Republican political advisor Fritz Carl “Duke” Zeller Jr. passed away on March 9, 2014 at his home in Afton at the age of 71, following a valiant battle with complications from Parkinson’s Disease.

Born in Peoria, Ill., he graduated from Capital Page School in Washington, D.C., attended Dartmouth College, received a B.A. in Political Science from George Washington University and attended Catholic University’s Graduate School of International Law and Foreign Relations.

A published author and presidential inaugural historian, Duke was editor of the official inaugural book and served on inaugural committees of Presidents Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush. His government service included serving as Senate page, and later staff assistant, to Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen (R-IL), Assistant Communications Director for Senator George Murphy (R-CA), Assistant Director of American Cause, Communications Director of the American Revolutionary Bicentennial Administration, and member of the National Park Advisory Board. He served four Presidents of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters between 1975-1991 as Communications Director and editor of Teamster, the International union’s monthly magazine. Living for many years in the Virginia Hunt country where he was an accomplished equestrian, he also served as Executive Director of the Virginia Thoroughbred Association.

Duke relocated to Nelson County in 2006 to live with his partner, Stuart Mills. Following an extended hospitalization beginning in December, he had his wish to live out the remainder of his life at their home fulfilled in February. Around-the-clock care was provided by a team of devoted friends, supported by Hospice of the Piedmont.

He is survived by his mother, Dena Zeller, of Reston; his sister, Anita Essalih of Houston, TX; his brother, Dean Zeller, of Reston; his nephews and nieces Tony Essalih, of Houston/Washington, D.C., Josh Zeller, of Fredericksburg, Justin Zeller, Jasmine Zeller and Jessica Zeller, of Reston; Mills; and many close friends and colleagues.

Funeral Services will be held at St. Mary Catholic Church, 304 West San Antonio Street in Fredericksburg, on Thursday, March 27, 10:30 a.m. Burial will be on Friday, March 28, at Oak Hill Cemetery, also in Fredericksburg.

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