

Alan Joseph Kromholz Obituary

Alan Joseph Kromholz, age 81, of Sebring, Florida, passed away peacefully at his home on March 19, 2020. Al was born on May 15, 1938 in Merrill, Wisconsin to Joseph and Dolores (Close) Kromholz. He is survived by his wife, Ruth; his son Joseph (Marjorie Stoneman) Kromholz, Whitewater, Wisconsin; his son John (Edsel) Kromholz, Sebring, Florida; his grandchildren Morgan (Bryce) Copperfield, Nicole Munoz, David Kromholz and Lucas Kromholz; his sister Diane (Wayne) Bennett; and his brother Steve (Barb) Kromholz. He was preceded in death by his parents and sister Joanne.

Alan graduated from Elmhurst College in 1960 with a B.A. in Philosophy. In 1964 he graduated from Eden Theological Seminary with a B.D. and in 1979 was awarded an MDiv. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1966-7, working on advanced graduate studies in Rural Community Development in the School of Agriculture. He was ordained in June 1964 at St. Stephens United Church of Christ, Merrill, WI.

He served the United Church of Christ as a Pastor in Evansville, WI and Watertown, WI. He served as Minister to the Business Community at Frieden's UCC, Milwaukee, and served as interim pastor at Spring Lake Presbyterian Church, Spring Lake, Florida. His career in the ministry came to a dramatic climax in May 1968 when he was removed from the Congregational UCC in Watertown for being too socially and politically active. His ministry at Watertown was detailed in the 1972 book, "Crisis in Watertown: The Polarization of an American Community." He continued to be involved in Civil Rights working as a voter registration worker in Mississippi and in the development of open housing in Wisconsin.

Much of his professional life was in the waste industry. He was Director of Sales Development, North America Waste Management, Inc.; V.P. Sales, ARS Waste Management Partners; and V.P. of Sales, North America United Waste. He would simply say proudly that he was a "garbage man."

Al married the love of his life, Ruth Ann Meyer of Chicago, Illinois in 1960. In 2000 they funded the Meyer-Kromholz Endowed Scholarship which is awarded annually by Elmhurst College. In 2012 they established and funded the Arnold Kromholz Silver 'M' Endowed Scholarship at Merrill High School in Wisconsin. They have strongly supported education as they believe education opens the door to success in life.

Al deeply loved his family. He was also passionate about helping others and social justice. He spent hours fishing with his grandchildren, and he will be deeply missed by his family and friends.

In 2016, in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Al spoke to students from the Whitewater Middle School and Whitewater High School about his work during the civil rights movement. Here is an excerpt from his speech:

"When you are an eye-witness to history you have a different understanding of the event. You discover that your senses are heightened. You understand in a unique way how the people involved in the event feel. The difficulty of that moment becomes highlighted. You become very focused and the issue of the moment touches you. When I see film clips on TV today of the struggle for racial justice or read about voter registration drives or seeking fair housing for people I feel very deeply what is happening. You see I was an eye witness to the struggle for racial justice and seeking to help register black voters in the South who were being denied their constitutional right to vote..."

He then shared his experiences with the students. As the Middle School Principal at the time said, "He spoke beautifully and brought life to something our students may have never experienced or even seen on the TV."

His speech ended like this, "Can I leave you with this? I went South because I believed as did my wife that you must be involved in living a life dedicated to justice, to love, and to walking humbly with your fellowman. These were things I learned in school when I was your age. I learned this because teachers like your teachers challenged me to question, to read and search both sides of a question or issue, helped me to understand the danger of propaganda and listening to only one source of information. They not only taught me history but challenged me to understand history. Remember what George Santayana said, 'If we fail to understand history we are bound to repeat it.'"

Arrangements entrusted to Stephenson-Nelson Funeral Home, 4001 Sebring Parkway, Sebring, FL 33870
Online condolences may be left at: www.stephensonnelsonfh.com