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Mildred Brown Had a Key Role

Mildred Brown, who died Thursday at the age of 76, held a special place in the Midlands. As publisher of the Omaha Star, the nation's longest-operating black-owned newspaper run by a woman, she provided neighborhood news and commentary for more than 50

years, giving her readers a weekly helping of information about events and opinions in the black community.

Among her concerns was the struggle for racial equality. She hired Charles Washington, who is widely remembered for his civil rights work, as a reporter and columnist for the paper. Whitney Young, who was executive secretary of the Omaha Urban League before going on to head the National Urban League, contributed editorials.

Mrs. Brown recalled in a 1988 interview that the paper sometimes supported boycotts to spotlight discriminatory practices, and that she and her staff were accused of being "troublemakers."

The Star and its publisher also played an important role by calling attention to the accomplishments of people in the black community.

Mrs. Brown emphasized positive values. A newspaper trade association spokesman once said that she did "little things for little people to make them proud of what they have done."

Her work "touched hundreds of people personally," as Robert Armstrong, director of the Omaha Housing Authority, said recently. "She has always been a positive force," Armstrong said.

Mrs. Brown once said that she had no fear. Certainly it took courage and self-confidence to start a newspaper in the 1930s, when times were hard and fewer doors were open to blacks and women than is the case today.

But Mrs. Brown, who liked to print stories about the success of others, had what it took to succeed. Her accomplishments should not be forgotten.



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