

Stanley Arkin, builder, former Miami Beach commissioner, dies at 82



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Stanley Arkin family photo

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When Stanley Arkin closed his construction business in 1997, he briefly considered retiring, focusing on his family and his hobbies including model trains.

But his retirement didn't last long.

Arkin — whose construction business built parts of Mount Sinai Medical Center, the Miami Beach Hilton and Miami Beach Jewish Community Center, to name a few — soon formed Arkin Consulting Inc., working on projects for what is now Jungle Island, Braman Management and the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts.

Arkin, who also served as a Miami Beach commissioner from 1984 to 1991 and was a life member of the University of Miami's Board of Trustees, died Saturday night at age 82, just a week shy of his birthday. His son Robert Arkin said his father's health declined after his wife of 56 years, Jill Arkin, died in June 2014.

"He died of a broken heart," he said. "He had a really hard time after my mother died."

Added Stanley Arkin's older son Bradley: "When she died he totally collapsed."

Arkin was born in Manhattan on Aug. 28, 1933, and moved to Miami Beach with his parents and two older siblings in 1934. His father, Joseph Arkin, began Arkin Construction in 1935.

Stanley Arkin graduated from the University of Miami in 1953 with an accounting degree and joined his family's construction business shortly thereafter. He became president of the company in 1994.

Bradley Arkin said his dad loved Miami Beach and became involved in boards because "he always wanted to help make things better."

In 1984, Arkin was part of a group of Miami Beach activists who helped bridge the gap between the Beach and the mainland.

"The idea is new and kind of exciting," Arkin said at the time. "It's going to be hard to do. It's the first time in 49 years I've seen both sides sit down and talk."

That same year he was appointed to fill a seat left vacant by a commissioner who resigned to run for a Senate seat.

After being appointed, the self-proclaimed "apolitical man," told the Miami Herald that he has "looked at city government from the other side."

"I think that we have an opportunity to see great change," he said. "It will take me a while to learn my way around as a commissioner. But I am exhilarated."

He served on the commission until 1991, when he resigned.

In the late 1990s, Stanley Arkin got involved in the Performing Arts Center Trust, and played a key role in the construction of the Adrienne Arscht Center for the Performing Arts as a consultant.

Arkin's job was to oversee the bidding process for contractors. In 1997, he led negotiations to hire Church & Tower, owned by the family of Cuban National Foundation leader Jorge Mas Canosa, as a construction manager.

He managed to get an agreement for less than \$4 million after talks started at \$7.5 million, according to news reports at the time. Arkin brought the contract in at less than \$4 million.

Arkin also dedicated a lot of his time to the University of Miami and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute.

"Stanley Arkin was just a wonderful human being with a passion for Bascom Palmer and a life-member of the Board of Trustees," said former University of Miami President Donna Shalala. "He was always the first to volunteer."

Norman Braman, auto magnate and longtime friend of the Arkins, said "Bascom Palmer wouldn't be what it is today without Stanley."

While his son said he loved being involved in the community and helping others, he also loved being with his wife and family.

When his wife — whom he met at a Fontainebleau pool party in 1957 — was diagnosed with dementia, he became a full-time caregiver and was with her until the end.

"I don't think there was a more dedicated family man and husband," Braman said.

Added Bradley Arkin: "They were so affectionate and so in love."

In addition to his sons Robert and Bradley Arkin, he is survived by his brother Jules Arkin and son Gregory Arkin and three grandchildren.

Services will be held at noon Thursday at Temple Beth Sholom, 4144 Chase Ave, Miami Beach.