

Don Mills, former Herald-Leader editor who also had career in politics, dies

BY KARLA WARD

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Don Mills, 90, a former editor for the Lexington Herald-Leader who served as an aide to two Kentucky governors, died Monday at his home in Lexington.

Mills was editor of the Lexington Herald from 1968 to 1979. He led the Sunday Herald-Leader



Don Mills

after Knight Newspapers bought the Herald and The Leader in 1973. "Editorially, he supported the integration of the Lexington Fire Department, the formation of the Lexington-Fayette County government, strong open

housing, reform of the broad-form deed and judiciary system, preservation of the state merit system, construction of Rupp Arena and restoration of the Opera House," his obituary stated. "He served on a committee to establish a long-term financial plan in Lexington similar to what state government uses to finance projects. He also supported tough

enforcement of environmental laws, including stricter strip-mining laws."

His tenure at the newspaper was bookended by service in the administrations of two Kentucky governors, Edward T. "Ned" Breathitt Jr., for whom he was press secretary, and John Y. Brown Jr.

Mills served as director of the Kentucky Public

Service Commission under Govs. Brereton Jones and Paul Patton, according to his obituary. He left the post at the PSC in 1997, according to Herald-Leader archives.

In 1982, Mills ran unsuccessfully for the Congressional seat held by Republican Larry Hopkins, who held the 6th District seat from 1979 to 1993.

In the mid-1980s, he owned and operated the Lexington Copy Center on Harrodsburg Road.

Mills started his journalism career as a 13-year-old boy growing up in Clinton in far Western

Kentucky, when he started a local newspaper called The Weekly Messenger, which he produced for more than three years, according to his obituary.

He went on to work as a reporter at the Paducah Sun-Democrat.

He was a graduate of the University of Kentucky and a lieutenant in the U.S. Army and was active in a number of civic organizations.

Funeral services will be conducted at noon June 6 at Kerr Brothers Funeral Home on Harrodsburg Road. Visitation will begin at 10 a.m.

FROM PAGE 1A

BESHEAR

said on April 30 at a press conference.

Beshear also compared the shriveling of governance at the University of Louisville in 2016 to what could happen at UK.

Former Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin replaced the University of Louisville's Board of Trustees, which pressured its president at the time, James Ramsey, to resign that year.

"And then what happens is what would have been a stellar legacy ends in a very difficult way," Beshear said at the April 30 press conference.

Davy Jones, a former University Senate member who voluntarily tracks policies related to UK, suggested Beshear could be foreshadowing some kind of change within the board of trustees, who have the final say over UK's financial, educational and other policies.

"We've got a governor here who's starting to apply some pressure," said Jones, a toxicology and cancer biology professor emeritus, or retired professor.

WHAT THE STATE LAW, UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS SAY

Sixteen of UK's 20 trustees are appointed by the governor, and the governor has the authority to remove and replace any or all appointed trustees, according to state law and UK's governing regulations.

The governor must have a reason to remove a trustee, but those reasons are vaguely worded.

This person can be removed "for any cause the Governor deems sufficient... including but not limited to malfeasance, misfeasance, incompetence, or gross neglect of duty," Kentucky law says.

Beshear also can remove all 16 appointed trustees at once for more specific reasons, including an inability to "hold regular meetings, to elect a chairperson annually, to establish a quorum, to adopt an annual budget, to set tuition rates, to conduct an annual evaluation of the president of the university, or to carry out its primary function to periodically evaluate the institution's progress in implementing its mission, goals, and objectives to conform to the strategic agenda."

Beshear would be required to notify the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, or the state's higher education policy-making agency, and the trustee being removed "in writing."

Within seven days of the governor's notice, the trustee could resign or argue against their removal. The CPE would investigate the case within 30 days of the notice, but Beshear would not have to agree with the council's advice.

To finally remove a trustee, Beshear would have to sign an executive order and replace them with a new appointee. He would choose the new appointee from a pool of three nominees chosen by the Governor's Postsec-

ondary Education Nominating Committee.

State law says the governor should make appointments to equally reflect the demographics of Kentucky.

"The Governor shall make the appointments so as to reflect, inasmuch as possible, equal representation of the two (2) sexes and no less than proportional representation of the two (2) leading political parties of the Commonwealth... and to assure that appointments reflect the minority racial composition of the Commonwealth," state law says.

A PRIOR CASE OF GOVERNOR, UK ADMINISTRATION DISCORD

The governor cannot hire or fire a university president. But Beshear has significant influence over his appointees, who make those presidential employment decisions.

Jones recalled when Louie Nunn, a former conservative Republican Kentucky governor, pressured John W. Oswald, a progressive UK president,



JESSE FRAGA Herald-Leader

D. Stephen Voss, an elections and politics professor on the University of Kentucky's faculty senate, sits in his office on May 6, 2026, in the Patterson Office Tower at the University of Kentucky.

to resign in the 1960s.

"Some of us are thinking, Beshear can pull on Capilouto what that governor in the '60s did on Oswald, 'I'm gonna stack the board against you now,'" Jones said. "(Oswald) knows it's gonna happen. So he submits his resignation to the board."

But the governor would not get to make these decisions unchecked. Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman can take legal action against the governor, usually in the form of a civil lawsuit, if he deems removals unconstitutional.

The governor can also put "soft pressure" on the

board to promote change or encourage people to resign without removing anyone himself, said D. Stephen Voss, an elections and politics professor on UK's Faculty Senate, which replaced the University Senate and offers advice to UK's administration.

"There's always the use of soft power to the extent a governor has the ability to use soft power against these folks, but often people get put on these boards because they're wealthy or politically connected," Voss said.

When an appointed trustee's term ends, the governor must replace

that person anyway, which is expected to be a more seamless transition than unseating someone.

"With these staggered terms of trustees, every year a few roll off and have to get replaced," Jones said. "A governor across several years can wind up moving the board to their position."

DID UOFL ISSUES SET A PRECEDENT?

Former Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin canned the entire University of Louisville Board of Trustees with an executive order in 2016. He called the board "operationally dysfunctional," the Louisville

Courier Journal reported.

Beshear, who was attorney general at the time, challenged Bevin's decision. Franklin Circuit Judge Phillip Shepherd agreed that Bevin acted illegally as a "judge, jury and executioner."

Bevin appealed Shepherd's order, and the Kentucky Supreme Court ultimately allowed him to keep the changes because the General Assembly already rewrote a law to validate his reasons for gutting the board.

"That controversy, that clash, settles what the governor can and can't do," Voss said.

Obituaries

OBITUARY INDEX

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NAME	AGE	CITY	DEATH	ARRANGEMENTS
Hamilton, Helen	76	Lexington	May 16	Kerr Brothers
Luallen, Lynn	88	Frankfort	May 12	Harrod Brothers Funeral Home & Crematory

Bold listings indicate expanded obituaries

Lynn Luallen July 21, 1937 - May 12, 2026



Frankfort, Kentucky - Francis Lynn Luallen passed away peacefully on May 12, 2026. He was born in Paris, Kentucky to Wilford and Frances Luallen. Lynn is survived by his wife, Crit Luallen, and children Scott Luallen (Amber), Mary Lynne Roach (Ronnie), J.P. Luallen and grandchildren Phillip Luallen, Embry Luallen Alex Luallen, Ben Luallen, Wesley Roach, Elee Roach, and Lola Luallen.

Lynn joined the Air Force as a teenager and returned to attend Transylvania University where he graduated in 1964.

Lynn truly had a servant's heart, his every action defined by humility and selflessness. He began his career in public service working in the office of Governor Julian Carroll. He went on to develop a remarkable career in the public arena focused on providing affordable housing for those who couldn't otherwise afford safe and decent homes.

He was the founding director of the Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC), the state's housing finance agency, which he was appointed to lead by Governor Carroll. He served as Executive Director of KHC under Governors Carroll, Martha Layne Collins, Brereton Jones and Paul Patton.

Lynn also served as Ken-

tucky State Director for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under President Bill Clinton. He left his mark in Louisville as well, joining Mayor Jerry Abramson to establish the Louisville Housing Development Corporation and later The Housing Partnership where he served two stints as its President.

Lynn was also instrumental in establishing the Federation of Appalachian Housing, a consortium of over 50 member organizations that works to provide affordable housing and community development across Appalachia. He served as its President, on its Board of Directors and in later years as an advisor and consultant.

Lynn was nationally recognized for his leadership in affordable housing, serving two terms as President of the National Council of State Housing Agencies, and as its Vice President and Secretary. He Served on the Board of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati, The Fannie Mae Housing Impact Advisory Council and the National Association of Housing Partnerships Board.

The array of awards and recognition Lynn received is testament to the wide impact of his work. They include the Distinguished Service Award from Transylvania University, a Lifetime Achievement Award named in his honor from the Kentucky Housing Corporation, and leadership awards from The Louisville Housing Partnership, the Kentucky Affordable Housing Association and the Home Builders Association.

His work secured a better quality of life for thousands of Kentucky families and he was happiest when he was cutting a ribbon on a new home with those families. But his work impacted the

state in other ways. He was especially proud of the Renaissance Kentucky program that he led under Governor Patton that improved the downtowns of nearly 100 small cities in Kentucky and the financing of Recovery Kentucky facilities across the state that continue to provide residential drug treatment services. He was also so proud of his staff and served as an important mentor to many who went on to make their own valuable contributions.

The defining characteristic of Lynn's life was his kind and generous spirit. He had a sweet soul with caring and positive support for everyone he touched. The loves of his life were his wife of 45 years, Crit, and his wonderful children and grandchildren. He also cared deeply for brothers-in-law Sam, Jackie and Bobby Blackburn, his numerous nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews, his many dear friends, his colleagues in the housing community and his 1948 Massey-Ferguson tractor.

Lynn's loving and gentle nature was felt by so many and he leaves behind a powerful legacy. He will live on in our hearts and in the lives of the many Kentucky families he touched.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Sanders-Brown Center on Aging at the University of Kentucky, to support their research into Alzheimer's Disease.

Sanders-Brown Center on Aging, 2199 Harrodsburg Rd., Lexington, KY. 40504

Arrangements are under the direction of Harrod Brothers Funeral Home & Crematory. Condolences may be shared via the online guestbook at www.harrod-brothers.com



JESSE FRAGA Herald-Leader

Davy Jones, a toxicology and cancer biology professor emeritus at the University of Kentucky, stands in front of a 1910 rendering of the university, in his office on May 1, 2026, in UK's Multidisciplinary Science Building.

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Helen Hamilton March 21, 1950 - May 16, 2026



Lexington, Kentucky - Helen O. Hamilton, 76, of Lexington, Kentucky, passed away peacefully on May 16, 2026, surrounded by the love of her family.

Guided by the words her mother shared with her as a young girl - "You must give back, expecting nothing in return, to the community you live in" - Helen spent her life doing exactly that. She was generous with both her time and resources, quietly improving the lives of countless people along the way.

In the fall of 1973, Helen moved to Kentucky and found her calling at Saint Joseph Hospital, where she faithfully volunteered for 46 years. Her extraordinary service was recognized many times over the years, including being named Philanthropist of the Year in 2009 and receiving the Outstanding Community Volunteer Award in 2014.

Beyond healthcare, Helen devoted herself to many civic and cultural organizations throughout Lexington. As a Friendship Ambassador for Lexington Sister Cities, she promoted education, tourism, and international friendship across the world. In 2006, she was recognized in Washington, D.C., as a Sister Cities International 50th Anniversary Distinguished Volunteer. In 2016, Camp Horsin' Around named her one of Lexington's "Amazing 8."

While Helen gave so much of herself to her community, her greatest joy was always the people she loved most. She shared a long and devoted marriage with her beloved husband, Frank Hamilton,

until his passing in 2016. In the years that followed, Helen was blessed to find companionship and happiness again with her sweetheart, Bill Blackburn, whose love and friendship brought her great joy.

Nothing lit up Helen's life more than her grandson, Nate. She adored him beyond measure and was endlessly proud of him. Whether celebrating his accomplishments or simply spending time together, Nate brought Helen immense happiness and purpose.

Helen embraced life fully. She was an avid golfer, loved traveling the world, and treasured time spent with family and friends. Her warmth, kindness, humor, and ability to make others feel valued left a lasting impact on everyone fortunate enough to know her.

Helen was preceded in death by her husband, Frank Hamilton. She is survived by her daughter, Holly Scudder (Brooks); her cherished grandson, Nate Scudder; her son, Jason O'Neal (Christy); her loving companion, Bill Blackburn; stepchildren Richard Hamilton (Jill), Patrick Hamilton (Jodi), and Margaret Hamilton (Cees); and step-grandchildren Caroline, Anna Kate, and William Hamilton.

Helen's life was a remarkable example of selfless service, compassion, generosity, and love. Her legacy will continue to live on for generations to come in the countless lives she touched and the community she helped strengthen.

Visitation will be held from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. on Friday, May 22nd, at Kerr Brothers Funeral Home, 463 E. Main Street, with a memorial service beginning at 2 p.m. A private burial will follow.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Lexington Sister Cities or the Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation. Please designate gifts in memory of Helen Hamilton.

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