

The Augusta Chronicle

Lela Stone: educator, advocate dies at 82

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Lela Wright Stone, an educator and an advocate for Boggs Academy, a Burke County preparatory school that served black students during times of racial segregation, died Thursday in Marietta, Ga. She was 82.

A Jefferson County native, Stone was a student at Boggs Academy, earned degrees in home economics and education from Barber-Scotia College and the University of Georgia, and returned to teach at Boggs and other Burke County schools for 24 years, according to the Boggs Academy alumni association's Web site.

Stone was Burke County's first black visiting teacher/social worker and its first black school board member. She will be best remembered for her efforts to preserve the Boggs Academy campus, said longtime friend Bettianne Hart, a former Superior Court judge.

"She kept fighting for that," Hart said.

Boggs Academy opened in 1910 as a private school, established like others in the South after the Civil War, in the absence of public schools for black students.

In 1985, when the Presbyterian Church USA put the property up for sale, a group led by Stone picketed church headquarters. The church eventually sold the grounds to Stone's organization, which restored it.

Hart met Stone when she was a 4-H student. She remembered Stone as a quiet, elegant woman with a talent for public speaking.

"She was passionate about children," Hart said, "She was also someone who organized a lot of projects in the community -- when she started something, she didn't let it go."

Stone was a member of Augusta's Belle-Terrace Presbyterian USA Church and also of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. She served on the board that restored Augusta's Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History.

W.H. Mays Mortuary of Augusta is in charge of funeral arrangements.

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