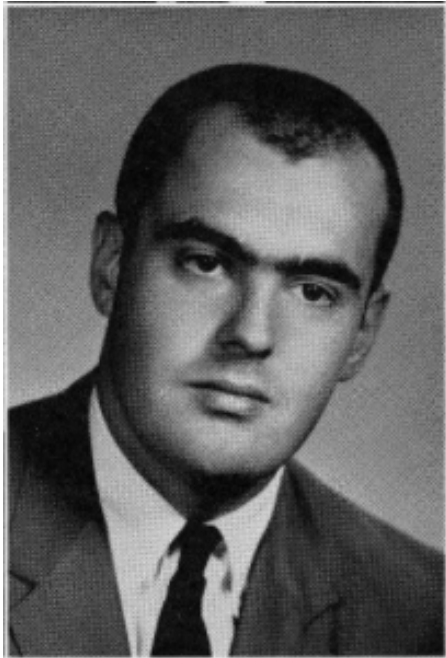


## Palmer, Charles (“Chuck”) Milner (February 3, 1939—November 7, 2021)



After graduating from East High School in Des Moines, Chuck came to Grinnell for an enriching four years and being awarded the B.A. in Sociology and Anthropology in June 1961.

He was an active resident in Rawson Hall and was elected its President by hall mates for our senior year, thus entitling him to membership that year on the Council of House Presidents (CofHP). He also was on the varsity track and football teams and the Hall's intramural swimming team.

Soon after graduating from Grinnell, he and Karen Ann Heise, his high-school sweet-heart and fellow Grinnell classmate in 1957-58, started a life-long, loving marriage on September 3, 1961. Their first stops were back in Des Moines for his one-year at Drake University Law School and then in Chicago for two years at the University of Chicago as a graduate student in Social Service Administration, leading to a Master of Social Work degree in 1964.

Chuck and Karen returned to Des Moines in May 1964 after the birth of their first child, Diane Elizabeth, on May 27. Thus began Chuck's 57 year career dedicated to the mental health and wellbeing of children and families in Iowa..

The capstones of that career were two gubernatorial appointments as Director of the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS), 1989-99 and 2011-17. In his first appointment he was well-known for the expansion of Medicaid health-care coverage and revamping Iowa's welfare programs. In his second stint he oversaw the reorganization of Iowa's mental health services from a county-by-county hodgepodge into a statewide system coordinated by 14 regional authorities, the consolidation of state mental hospitals and transferring the administration of Iowa's Medicaid health care program to private companies.

Upon his death, this public service was recognized by the current DHS Director, who stated, "Director Palmer was a great public servant, leader and friend. I'm

grateful and thankful for his kind words of encouragement and partnership over the last two years. I was fortunate to have known him. He has a tremendous passion for those we serve and for supporting the team at DHS. His work and passion continued up to his passing. He will deeply be missed.” Similar words were uttered by former Iowa Governor Terry Branstad, who made those appointments: Palmer’s acceptance of the second appointment was “really far and above the call of duty. He really loved human services and serving people. He always was accessible to people and was thoughtful and caring.”

Between those two appointments, Chuck served for 11 years as President of Institute for Social and Economic Development, a statewide nonprofit provider of a variety of asset development services for low-income Iowans. Before the first appointment, Palmer was engaged as Chief Psychiatric Social Worker for the Des Moines Child Guidance Center, Director of the Community Planning Division for United Way of Greater Des Moines and leading the Department’s division of mental health and developmental disabilities. Somehow he found time to serve as an adjunct professor at Drake and the University of Iowa and volunteer for various community organizations, including the American Red Cross and the National Association of Social Workers.

Chuck loved fishing at the family cabin near Nisswa, Minnesota and in Canada every summer with his cousin and friends. He also was a noted lover of reading books.

Chuck and Karen are the proud parents of Diane Elizabeth Sanders and Michael Richard Palmer (born March 6, 1968), all of whom survive Chuck along with Diane’s partner Mark Carpenter and daughter-in-law Chrissy Palmer and grandchildren Max Sanders and Sophie Palmer.

