

Habitat founder Fuller remembered as visionary: Died February 3 after brief illness

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Millard Fuller, founder of the humanitarian organization Habitat for Humanity International, is being remembered as a visionary whose commitment to providing housing for the poor was rooted in his Christian faith. Fuller, 74, died February 3 after a brief illness.

“Millard Fuller was a force of nature who turned a simple idea into an international organization that has helped more than 300,000 families move from deplorable housing into simple, decent homes they helped build and can afford to buy and live in,” Jonathan Reckford, Habitat for Humanity International’s chief executive officer, said in a statement.

Fuller left Habitat amid controversy after a former employee said in 2005 that he had sexually harassed her. Fuller denied the allegations. Though the Habitat board of directors said it was unable to substantiate the charges, he was dismissed.

An attorney and business executive, Fuller was born in Alabama. Not yet 30, he was already a wealthy man when he and his wife, Linda, decided to renounce their wealth. They were heavily influenced by the work of Koinonia Farm, a Christian community in rural Georgia, as the example of a “demonstration plot for the kingdom of God.”

The Fullers eventually took to the idea of neighbors getting together and building simple homes for those too poor to afford them. The Fullers brought the idea to Africa and, on their return to the United States in 1976, founded Habitat for Humanity International.

Habitat for Humanity earned praise from supporters such as former president Jimmy Carter, who became a longtime volunteer. He called Fuller “one of the most

extraordinary people I have ever known.” Among his many honors, Fuller was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country’s highest civilian honor, in 1996.

After he fell out with the organization he started, Fuller founded another group, the Fuller Center for Housing, located in Americus, Georgia.

A spokesperson said the center will proceed with plans for a summer project to build ten houses in Fuller’s hometown of Lanett, Alabama, to mark what would have been the Fullers’ 50th wedding anniversary.

“Millard would not want people to mourn his death,” said Linda Fuller, cofounder of both Habitat for Humanity and the Fuller Center. “He would be more interested in having people put on a tool belt and build a house for people in need.” *-Ecumenical News International, Religion News Service*