

Dwight Killian Shellman, Jr., May 6, 1934 - March 21, 2012

Dwight Killian Shellman, Jr. died peacefully at his home near Woody Creek, Colorado on March 21, 2012, surrounded by family members, after a long battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease). He was 77 years old.

He was born on May 6, 1934 in Windber, PA, the eldest of four children born to Dwight K. Shellman and Grace Darling (Baylor) Shellman. During his childhood, he lived in numerous cities in the United States as his family followed Dwight Sr., a dentist in the federal Public Health Service, from one assignment to the next at various federal facilities. It was during one such assignment in Englewood, CO in 1944-45 that Dwight Jr. became acquainted and fell in love with Colorado and the Rocky Mountains.

He graduated from Springfield High School in Ohio in 1952 and married Norma Lee Brumfield in September 1953. They moved to Colorado, and he enrolled in undergraduate studies at the University of Denver, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1957. He then attended the University of Denver School of Law as a Legal Aid Scholar, and received his LL.B degree in 1959. He was admitted to the Colorado bar in 1959 and began practicing law as an Assistant City Attorney in Denver. In 1960, he became an associate attorney of Holland & Hart, and later a partner.

In 1968, Dwight, Norma and their three children moved to the Roaring Fork valley when he was transferred to Holland & Hart's office in Aspen. He left the firm in 1969 and subsequently joined with other local practitioners to form Shellman, Carney & Edwards, P.C., with offices in the Wheeler Opera House. Thus began an enduring friendship – and an extraordinary legal, political and philosophical partnership – with Joe Edwards.

He and Joe ran for seats on the three-member Pitkin County Board of County Commissioners in 1972, on a platform of preserving the county's rural character. The manner in which they organized support was fundamentally different than previous campaigns for county office. They organized and attended coffees in the kitchens and living rooms of residents throughout the county, and asked the participants to flesh out and prioritize various community objectives such as growth control, transit planning, open space and trails, and employee housing. The agendas from the individual neighborhoods were then combined and synthesized into a countywide plan of consensus, which Dwight and Joe pledged to implement if elected. This methodology was taken from the playbook of Dwight's intellectual mentor, Saul Alinsky, who first coined the term "community organizer" and authored two influential manifestos, *Reveille for Radicals* and *Rules for Radicals*.

Both men were elected in November 1972, and Michael Kinsley became an important member of this political partnership on his appointment to the board in 1975. Dwight, Joe and Michael served together less than one full term of office, but they successfully preserved the physical landscape of Pitkin County, and radically transformed its political and governmental culture. Most of their objectives were bitterly contested at the time by

good and honorable people, but these three had the mandate based on majority consensus. They delivered on their promises to the electorate, and they stood their ground when the inevitable political backlash occurred. All three prevailed in a 1976 recall attempt, because they did what they said they would do and the majority of the electorate continued to support their mission.

The major accomplishments and influences of Dwight, Joe and Michael include:

- The formation of the Pitkin County's neighborhood caucuses, and their incorporation as significant consultative bodies within Pitkin County government
- The development and adoption of Pitkin County's Master Plan and the codification of its signature Land Use Code, which downzoned the county to density levels consistent with its historic rural character, and has been widely utilized as a template by other localities facing similar pressures
- The formation of the Pitkin County Bus System and its subsequent combination with the City of Aspen bus system to form the Roaring Fork Transit Authority (RFTA)
- The creation of the employee housing program
- The creation of Pitkin County's open space and trails program
- The construction of the passive-solar airport terminal, one of the first such public facilities in the United States
- The construction of the current Aspen Valley Hospital facility
- The adoption of the Home Rule Charter in 1978, establishing an utterly unique structure of county government and a non-partisan method of electing county officials that is different from every other county in Colorado

Although Joe and Michael subsequently were re-elected, Dwight left office in 1976 after one term and returned to the private practice of law. During this time, he met the love of his life, attorney Barbara Ornitz, and they formed a personal and professional partnership that culminated in their marriage in 2000 and endured until her death in 2002.

Although Dwight never again held elected office, he continued his public service to the people of Pitkin County as an appointed member of Planning & Zoning Commission and the RFTA board. He also remained active in local planning matters by publicly opposing several prominent proposals, including the W/J Ranch subdivision, the 1995 Aspen Airport expansion to accommodate Boeing 737s and night flights, the expansion of the Elam Gravel Pit in Woody Creek, and the initial phase of the Burlingame employee housing project.

Dwight turned his focus southward in 1993, when he collaborated with then-Woody Creek resident Don Henley and formed the Caddo Lake Institute to preserve and protect the largest natural body of fresh water in Texas. During his tenure as President of CLI from 1993-2006, he used the same community organization model that was so successful in Pitkin County. Dwight's efforts were instrumental in Caddo Lake's designation as a wetland of international significance under the Ramsar treaty. He also spearheaded the creation of the nearby Caddo Lake National Wildlife Preserve, for which he received the Citizen's Service Award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Dwight was a visionary who believed that individuals are responsible for their own governance; that neighborhoods are the essential foundation of local government; and that governance most legitimately flows from the bottom up, not the top down. He, his colleagues and countless kindred spirits changed the world, or at least the small portion of it situated in Pitkin County, Colorado and Harrison County, Texas. He will be greatly missed by his family and friends and the many people who accompanied him during his fantastic journey on this planet.

He was preceded in death by his father Dwight Shellman (Sr.), mother Grace Baylor Shellman, brother David J. Shellman, and wife Barbara E. Ornitz.

He is survived by his sisters Barbara A. Hiles and Gail Sines, daughter Stephanie Shellman Etcheverry, sons Dwight K. Shellman III and Kurt B. Shellman, grandchildren Jonathan B. Shellman, Jennifer Clark, and Agustín, Tomás & Andrés Etcheverry, great-grandchildren Mason & Damion Clark, and Kadyne & Killian Shellman, and numerous nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews.

He will be laid to rest next to his beloved wife Barbara in the Aspen Grove Cemetery in a private ceremony. Community members are cordially invited to a memorial service on Friday, May 18th, at the Wheeler Opera House in Aspen, to celebrate his life and many accomplishments. An additional memorial service is being arranged for the members of the Caddo Lake community in Texas. Additional details regarding the memorial services will be provided as arrangements are finalized.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to:

- The Rocky Mountain Chapter of the ALS Society, 7403 Church Ranch Blvd., Ste. 109, Westminster, CO 80021 (303.832.2322; info@alsaco.org); or
- The Barbara Ornitz Cancer Challenge Fund, c/o Aspen Valley Medical Foundation, P.O. Box 1639, Aspen, CO 81612 (970.544.1298; info@avmfaspden.org)