



Sam R Benningfield

April 20, 1937 - May 16, 2016

Benningfield, Jr. Sam R. Benningfield, Jr., died Monday, May 16, 2016, in OSU's Medical Intensive Care Unit of respiratory and heart failure after a long and courageous struggle with COPD. He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Karen of Beechwold; beloved nephew, Christopher (Margaret) Donner, Ph.D., Chicago, IL, of whom Sam was justifiably proud; brother-in-law, John (Barbara) Showalter, Upper Arlington, OH; and close extended family members, Keith and Jean Countryman, Salem, OH, and Jane Robins, Buckeye Lake, OH. Sam is pre-deceased by his foster parents Mr. and Mrs. Walter H. Kinkay of Indian Hills, OH. Born April 20, 1937 in St. Petersburg, FL, Sam last month celebrated his 79th birthday. He grew up in Cincinnati, attended Western Reserve (now Case Western) University and spent three years with the U.S. Air Force, stationed at the 47th TAC Hospital, McGuire AFB in New Jersey. Sam was a medical service specialist and completed a tour in Europe. (He liked to say that he "kept the country at peace" in the mid-'50s). He was honorably discharged in June, 1958. Sam began his professional career as an intern with the Associated Press in San Francisco. Early in 1962, he moved to the Los Angeles area and went to work as a photo-journalist with the Baum-Fleetwood-McRae chain of suburban newspapers, where he met his wife, Karen, then editor of the Montebello News semi-weekly. They were married December 29, 1962 in Mt. Lebanon Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh. After buying a home in Whittier, CA, with a growing animal menagerie, Sam joined Pendleton Tools as assistant

advertising manager, learning the business from the ground up. Moving back East in 1967 to be closer to Karen's family in Pittsburgh, Sam spent several years as an account executive with the Ira Thomas advertising agency in Youngstown, and then joined Joseph Gapstur & Co. in Ashland, handling a diverse portfolio of industrial and manufacturing accounts in Ohio and Michigan. After Karen became public information director for Columbus Mayor M. E. Sensenbrenner in 1971, the couple moved to Upper Arlington and Sam continued to commute for several years. In the mid-'70s, Sam was hired as advertising account manager by B. A. Graphics, Inc. in Columbus, working with a division of the Borden company and other local businesses. He and Karen launched their own marketing, communications and fund-raising firm, Mid-America Communications, Inc., in 1984 and maintained an office on S. Fourth St. in Columbus for nearly ten years. They represented clients such as United Commercial Travelers (UCT), the Athletic Club of Columbus, OCSEA (Ohio Civil Service Employees Association), the King Arts Complex, the Development Committee for Greater Columbus, and also managed signature nonprofit fund-raising events such as the Celebrity Waiters Luncheon benefiting Recreation Unlimited. An adventurous, independent and fearless promoter, Sam organized the first Junior Golf Tournament for UCT's national convention in Philadelphia, and directed a film for them featuring the national Special Olympics event in South Bend, IN. Perceiving a need to showcase Columbus, Sam initiated, raised sponsor dollars, and organized a luncheon for the national Press Corps accompanying President Ronald Reagan on a trip to Columbus. A very generous and giving man, Sam donated his time for several years to cook Thanksgiving turkeys for guests at Ronald McDonald House, and then coordinated a benefit fund-raiser for the charity - the first ever held in the Statehouse Atrium - featuring celebrity hosts Ohio Gov. George and Janet Voinovich. Even though he was a lifelong Republican, Sam also was a supporter of several Democrat office holders, including close friends James A. Roseboro, Columbus City Councilman, and Dr. John Rosemond, a mayoral candidate. He was close to Gertrude Donahey, the first

woman in Ohio to serve as State Treasurer. At Mrs. Donahey's request, Sam took on the challenging political job of managing Mary Ellen Withrow's primary campaign for the Democratic nomination to succeed Mrs. Donahey. Competing against six male candidates, all better known and better funded, Sam traveled the state with Mrs. Withrow, secured support from the Teamsters' union in Cleveland and newspaper editorial boards across the state, and developed a strategy that led to her successful primary victory. She ultimately became the U.S. Treasurer. Sam semi-retired in 1991 after an auto accident left him with a chronic spine injury, serving as a marketing consultant. From 1996 to 1998, he served as primary caregiver for his elderly in-laws, Mel and Olivia Maegerlein, enabling them to live out the remainder of their lives in their Columbus condominium. An avid reader of history, biographies and political nonfiction, Sam was a "news junkie," scanning up to five newspapers daily. A true "renaissance man," he also loved gardening, the Cincinnati Reds, antique shopping, art, boating, water-skiing, cooking, classical music and his pet cats and dogs. Sam collected political cartoons, books, clocks, fountain pens and stamps. Although he was a confirmed "techno-phobe" and refused to use either a computer or a cell phone, he was an "old school" dedicated letter and note writer, and a witty wordsmith who composed on an IBM Selectric typewriter. In 2005, he was diagnosed with COPD, and battled lung disease for more than 10 years. A strong and stubborn "fighter," he confounded his pulmonary professionals with his strong will to live and amazing ability to "bounce back" from respiratory distress - even recovering after a seven-day stay in hospice in 2014. Special thanks to his longtime medical team of Dr. Mary Jo Welker, OSU family practice; OSU pulmonary physician, Dr. Phil Diaz, OSU cardiology specialist, Dr. Ted Fraker and the caring staff of Mayfair Village. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made either to Grandview Heights Public Library, 1685 W. First Ave., Columbus, OH 43212, to the Open Shelter, 370 W. State St., Columbus, OH 43215, or to any charity of your choosing. A celebration of Sam's life will be

held on June 12, 2016 at 2 p.m. at RUTHERFORD-CORBIN FUNERAL HOME, 515 HIGH ST, WORTHINGTON, OH 43085. Online remembrances and tributes may be made at WWW.RUTHERFORDFUNERALHOME.COM

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUN 12. 2:00 PM (ET)

Rutherford-Corbin Funeral Home
515 High Street
Worthington, OH 43085
(614) 885-4006
info@rutherfordfuneralhome.com
<https://www.rutherfordfuneralhomes.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Sam R Benningfield*

January 28, 2023 at 10:24 AM



“ *Karen,
Oh my how I laugh and smile when I have been around you and Sam. Hospitality galore and oh so giving. My whole life changed in 1970 when I met you with Mayor Sensenbrenner. Through your friendship and leadership, you and Sam sent me on a new career. From Ashland to Columbus you were always faithful friends. And I am so sorry we have not been together these last years before retirement. I will come to the service but would love to come visit you in the interim.
Your life with Sam is a treasure. I know you two fit like a glove and I know you will miss him dearly.
With love,
Cheryl*

Cheryl L. Kight - May 25, 2016 at 12:34 PM



“ *Karen, I was so sorry to read of Sam's passing. You two were such a team and he will be missed. My thoughts and prayers are with you. Dorothy Teater*

Dorothy Teater - May 25, 2016 at 09:00 AM

HU

“ God Bless and Thank YOU, Sam for your service... RIP ... And Femper Fi.



Herb Guyer-Sharfenaker USMC - May 24, 2016 at 07:50 AM

KE

“ Karen, we were so very sorry to learn of Sam's passing. While regretfully, we have not managed to stay very well connected in more recent years, we have continued to think of you fondly, both as family and as friends. Unfortunately, we will not be able to make it back to OH for Sam's service, but please know that you will be on our minds, in our hearts and in our prayers.

Love,

Lee, Kim, Derek and Brooke Edwards

Kim Edwards - May 22, 2016 at 07:53 PM

GD

“ We were so sad to hear of Sam's passing. He will certainly be missed at the Grandview Library!

Our condolences and deepest sympathy to you,

Blessings,

Your friends in the Circulation Department

Grandview Library Circulation Department - May 21, 2016 at 05:56 PM

LI

*Dear Karen,
We are grateful to have known Sam. You are in our prayers, especially today as his life is remembered & celebrated.
Sincerely,
Mayfair Village*

lisa - June 12, 2016 at 09:20 AM