

IN MEMORY OF
**WINFREY
DAVID
HOUSTON**

Obituary for Winfrey David Houston



Winfrey David Houston, 88, of Stillwater died at home on Monday, March 23. A man many people considered to be Mr. Stillwater lived his life with passion and optimism.

When the family gathered after his death, a final handwritten message for his children was shared, called “5 Wishes for You.” Expect to be happy. Never, never give up. Family comes first. Children are God’s greatest gift. It is better to be healthy than to be sick, by a damn sight (an expression he picked up while serving in Germany). The page was signed “With much love, Dad.”

Winfrey was born June 1, 1926 in Stillwater, Okla. to Oscar David Houston and Lillian Holbrook Houston. He attended Lincoln Elementary School and graduated from Stillwater High School in 1944. He graduated from Oklahoma A&M with a degree in history and political science and completed his law degree from OU in 1950.

When he was a senior in high school, Claude Bradshaw took his son Gerald and Winfrey to Oklahoma City to volunteer for service in the Army Air Corps. While completing training in Seattle as a B-29 flight engineer in May 1945, the war ended. He and Gerald shipped out together, serving in the Allied-Occupation of Germany for 10 months.

In 1948, on a blind date, Winfrey met a Woodward girl, Barbara Lowrey. They married on Nov. 26, 1950 in Woodward, had four children and were loving partners and role models both at home and in the Stillwater community until her death.

An only child, Winfrey was raised by a single mother and grandmother from the age of 18 months after the death of his father. Lillian, the sole bread winner during the Depression, found a job as deputy court clerk at the Payne County Courthouse, where she worked for 40 years. These women and his Perkins family

were instrumental in his character development. And being raised in and around the courthouse led him ultimately to his career choice as an attorney.

Locally, Winfrey is probably most known for his unwavering conviction for preservation of historic buildings. His dedication and love of family is an undeniable first, but second was his love for his hometown and particularly Downtown Stillwater.

In 1981, as a Stillwater pioneer in the reuse of old buildings, he began a massive revitalization in the central business district. Winfrey, with silent-partner Barbara, remodeled the three-story Hoke Building now known as the 7th Avenue Center. Leading the charge to save what was known as south high school and the old junior high school, the buildings were repurposed, reimagined and are now the Stillwater Public Library and Stillwater Community Center.

A common downtown site was Winfrey checking in on merchants, sharing ideas on how to continue improving the area and keeping a close watch on his building to ensure the tenants were happy.

For many years Winfrey was Stillwater School Board attorney and Perkins city attorney while maintaining an active private practice. He also served as president of many legal organizations, including the Payne County Bar Association, the Oklahoma Bar Association, and the Oklahoma Bar Foundation. He served as a member of the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association, and in 1987, received the Oklahoma Bar Association's "Outstanding Lawyer Award in Practice More Than Thirty-five Years." In 2003, Winfrey was recognized as one of only a few practicing attorneys who have been members of the Oklahoma Bar for 50 years. In 2007, the Oklahoma Bar Association honored him with the Joe Stamper Distinguished Service Award.

Besides his legal work, he was a member of Rotary and in the past was president of the Evening Lions Club. He has served on the Mayor's Human Relations Committee, the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the Stillwater Medical Center Board, the Public Housing Board, the Downtown Neighborhood Planning Team, the Community Center Board, and the Main Street Board, and Main Street's "Design and Economic Restructuring" committee. He also has served Stillwater as a City Commissioner. In 1996, Winfrey was inducted into the Stillwater Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame. In 2004, he received the Oklahoma Heritage Association "Distinguished Service Award for the Preservation of State and Local History."

Winfrey has also served on the Park and Event Recreation Board as a Cultural Committee member, as a member of the Stillwater High School Alumni Board, a member of the Policy Advisory Committee of the comprehensive Planning Group and the Neighborhood Alliance Board. He also served on the Planning Committee for the 1967 addition to the Payne County Court House. The Roxie Webber Elderly Housing Center and Stillwater Medical Center were both planned and built during his tenure on those boards.

He was preceded in death by his parents and wife.

He is survived by daughter Ann Houston and Billy McCollom, Stillwater; son David Houston and wife Denise, Oklahoma City; daughter Nancy Beckstrom and husband Jim, Stillwater, and daughter Mary Massie and husband Phil, Tampa, FL. He is also survived by nine grandchildren; Amanda Jenkins Driskel and husband Derek, Stillwater; Tyler Jenkins and wife Mariko, Denver, CO.; Jessica Jenkins Tanton and husband Jason, Leawood, KS; Daron Houston and wife Kasi, Houston, TX.; Matt Houston and wife Lindsay, Edmond; David Beckstrom, Denver, CO; Jarrod Beckstrom and wife Samantha, Mustang, OK.; Erik Massie, Olathe, KS, Kyle Massie, Tampa, FL; and 14 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Friday, March 27 at the First Presbyterian Church of Stillwater with Rev. Leah Hrachovec officiating followed by a celebration of Winfrey's life in a reception. Family will greet friends from 6-8 p.m. on Thurs. March 26 at Strode Funeral Home.

Memorial contributions may be made in his name to First Presbyterian Church, 524 S. Duncan, Stillwater or Stillwater Community Foundation to the Winfrey Houston Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 425, Stillwater, OK 74076-0425 or www.cfok.org/donate

Condolences may be e-mailed to the family and an online obituary may be viewed by visiting www.strodefh.com .

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