



David J. Sparrow

July 5, 1927 - January 1, 2012

David J. Sparrow, a prominent Detroit real estate and property development attorney for 60 years, died Sunday in Royal Oak's William H. Beaumont Hospital after a short illness. He was 84. Services will be at 11 a.m., Thursday in Christ Church Cranbrook, 470 Church Rd., Bloomfield Hills. The cremated remains will be interred in the church's columbarium. A resident of Birmingham and Harbor Springs, Mr. Sparrow was born and raised in Detroit. He graduated from Northwestern High School in 1945, then served two years in the U.S. Army. Upon discharge, he enrolled in the Detroit College of Law, graduating in 1951. He married Dona Patricia Waters in the same year. She died in 2008. For 52 years, Mr. Sparrow was the partner of the late Gerald Rowin in the firm of Rowin & Sparrow. Meeting on the first day of law school, they liked to say the only contract they ever had was an initial handshake, with nothing on paper. A lifelong Episcopalian, Mr. Sparrow was a past warden and vestry member of Christ Church Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills. Up until the time of his death, Mr. Sparrow was a trustee of the Detroit College of Law, now known as the Michigan State University College of Law. He served 27 years. For two decades he was president and a trustee of the board of the Oakland County Intermediate School District and several terms as a trustee of Mariners Inn in Detroit. His egalitarian roots took him into Democratic Party politics where he became close friends and associates with Frank Kelley, who was the attorney general of Michigan from 1962 to 1998, and Stuart Hertzberg who was a Democratic National Committeeman from Michigan and a fellow

lawyer. Kelley said of Mr. Sparrow that "he met all the standards that we associate with human excellence: intelligence, courage, achievement, compassion, loyalty, honesty and decency in all things. I knew him for most of his life and never found anything to change my opinion." Hertzberg said he had "no older nor finer friend than David. He moved to the top of every organization to which he ever belonged because of his talents and temperament. He was a quiet presence in the middle of whatever was going on." For 60 plus years, Kelley and Hertzberg shared a special summer weekend known as "Kelley's" with Mr. Sparrow, and a few previously departed friends, including Mr. Rowin and former Michigan Governor, John B. Swainson. Hertzberg said, "We talked politics until we were hoarse – all but Kelley who the longer he talked the louder he got, dominating the discussion." The Sparrow family established a vacation home in Harbor Springs in the late 1960s, where the family spent their summers. Over the past decade, Mr. Sparrow and his dear wife, Pat, spent more and more of the year there. He joined a morning coffee klatch at Harbor Springs Island Bean restaurant, where this week his friends reminisced about him. One of them, Joe D'Italia, a self-described confirmed Republican, said that Mr. Sparrow, a confirmed Democrat, "was a guy you could talk to about politics, and while he didn't agree with you, was always pleasant about it. We looked forward to those conversations and are going to miss them a lot. He was a gentleman who brought class to our group." Mr. Sparrow is survived by three daughters: Susan Carson of Good Hart, Michigan and Houston, Texas, Nancy of Royal Oak and Joanne Stewart of Kalamazoo; six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Memorials may be designated to Focus: HOPE, 1355 Oakman Boulevard, Detroit, MI 48238.

Tribute Wall

AH

“ He sounds like such an amazing man who leaves behind an amazing legacy. His character was passed onto his daughter Susan, whom I have the honor of knowing. God Bless your family.

Angie Henderson - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

MH

“ Dear Susan, We just learned from Barbara Lapham of your father's death. Dick and I extend our deepest sympathies to you and your family.

Mary and Dick Heend - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ Our sincere sympathy on the loss of your Dad. He was a man of class and distinction and he will be greatly missed on Lower Shore Drive! Joan and Pat Berardo

joan berardo - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

GD

“ David & I had never met, until 1 day, 1996, I made a presentation to the board at Mariner's. My car broke down on the way, and I took a cab, but had also forgot my wallet. David came outside, paid the cab driver, and after the meeting, drove me to my abandoned car in the New Center area and waited for my tow truck with me. One slice of life that I'll always remember and a true act of kindness from a true gentleman. We never met again, but I'll always remember him. My thoughts and prayers are with your family. Our region was better off for having David as its resident all these years.

gary dembs - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

LW

“ Dave was a gentleman through and through...a wonderful neighbor and a fine man...we will all miss him greatly. Those early morning tracks out of his garage are no more...we are sad.

Lucia West - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

WK

“ I had the privilege of working as superintendent at Oakland Schools during Dave's tenure as president of the board. I never met a man whose integrity exceeded Dave's. While many of my colleagues had employment contracts that were scores of pages long, mine was one page because I knew that Dave's word was his bond. I wish we could attend the memorial but we just arrived in Florida and my wife is grappling with the effects of three hip surgeries in three years. He will live in the memories of many of us. Bill and Gerry Keane

William G. Keane - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ Dear Nancy, Susan and Joanne, I am so sorry to hear of the death of your father. I can not present myself in person due to foot surgery yesterday but please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers. I have many fond memories of your family and the times you helped a young mother with three lively boys. You would be pleased to meet my three men today and see how well they have turned out. Take good care of each other at this sad time. I would have loved to meet your children. With much love to you all! Judy Barker

judith LeVan Barker - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

BL

“ Dear Susan, Nancy, and Joanne, Your parents were wonderful neighbors since 1978 when I moved to Lower Shore Dr. with my family. We would chat with Pat as she walked alone or with a neighbors dog. Dave would always slow down and wave as he passed us on the road on his way to golf or coffee in town. We will miss you, Dave. Fondly, Barbara Lapham

Barbara Lapham - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

HC

“ We are so sorry to hear of David's passing. David was one of our favorites of all we have been so fortunate to form friendships with in Northern Michigan. He was a man with a wonderful heart for others and we will always cherish his friendship. May Peace be with all of David's family and friends.

Howard and Jeannie Canada - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JC

“ We haven't known a better man and we miss him. Jim and Ann Churchill

Jim and Ann Churchill - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

DF

“ Dave was a good friend and neighbor and we will miss seeing him very much. Our condolences to the family.

David & Nancy Fershee - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

KW

“ Susan, Nancy and Joanne, Was so sad to hear about your dads passing. He and your mom were such dear friends to my mom Janet Dalrymple, they had such good times together. He will surely be missed.

Kathy Walker - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

KJ

“ Such a warmhearted, caring man. My thoughts and prayers are with you all.

Karen Jocque - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JN

“ Susan, Nancy and Joanne, For 26 years your Dad was so much more than my employer. He was a friend, confidant, advisor and mentor. A kinder man you will never meet. He will forever have a special place in my heart and will be greatly missed. All my Love, Joanne

Joanne Van Nest - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

SM

“ Dear Susan and Mike, I just want to send my thoughts and prayers to you and your families during this difficult time. Sincerely, Sandy Murray

Sandy Murray - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

NH

“ Susan and Family --- we grieve and celebrate your father and all his contributions and his life here on earth. A memorial in his honor has been made to Focus: Hope in Detroit. Your father's legacy of good works will live on forever through you all. Neil and Annmarie Hawkins, Midland, MI

Neil and Annmarie Hawkins - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

CM

“ All through my travels of the last fifty-eight years, the kindness of your dad and mom have been with me. I have thought of them often. It's a life to celebrate that leaves that kind of mark on someone. My thoughts and a hug go out to you all. Chris

Christine Merser - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

CB

“ Sincere sympathy to the family of a remarkable man. May your lifetime memories comfort and console you.

Catherine Baase - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ The entire Kalamazoo Country Day community is thinking of Joanne and her family at this time. May God bring peace to the entire family.

Jenny Boglitsch - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

IW

“ Dave was such a wonderful man. He will be missed by all his neighbors in Harbor Springs. My prayers are with his family.

Ima Jo Williams - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

CL

“ David was an inspiration to me. He will be missed at the MSU College of Law.

Charlie Langton - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

TD

“ OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS ARE WITH THE SPARROW FAMILY. IN MY LIFETIME DAVID TOPS THE LIST OF MOST ADMIRERD PEOPLE.

TOM DANSBURY - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

KW

“ David will be sorely missed at MSU. He was a great leader and a great friend to the University.

Kim Wilcox - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

CC

“ Thoughts and prayers are with the entire Sparrow family. Mr. Sparrow was a long time member and one of my all time favorites at Birchwood Farms. He always had a smile and a kind word. He will definitely be missed.

Cris Cavitt - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

LN

“ My prayers and sympathies to the Sparrow family. This is a loss for everyone that had the privilege to know Dave Sparrow. In Webster's Dictionary next to the word "gentleman", a picture of Dave should be included alongside the definition.

Lin Nash - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

TB

“ *Dave and I worked together at the Detroit Bar Association library in the Penobscot Building in 1949. We were friends for 60 years. I'll miss him.*

Thomas E. Brennan - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

MB

“ *My condolences to the family. I remember David as a lawyer of great dignity and impeccable character. It was my great honor to serve as a trustee of the Detroit College of Law/MSU with him.*

Marianne O Battani - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

TR

“ *Our prayers are with you.*

Terry Gonda & Kirsti Reeve - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

DH

“ *In addition to his kind, happy, and wonderful demeanor, David was a leader as a lawyer, at Christ Church Cranbrook, and the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, and in his civic work. He will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved him. Donna and Gene Hartwig*

Donna and Gene Hartwig - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JN

“ *It was a pleasure to get to know David as a fellow Trustee at MSU. His passion for his community and for the furtherance of the school were infectious. We shall miss his leadership and guidance.*

James Nicholson - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

AR

“ I will miss him saying "Hello My Dear" with his great smile everytime I saw him. He was such a sweet man. Anne McDonald Rudziensky

Anne Rudziensky - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

MG

“ To the Sparrow Family, I am very sad to hear of Mr. Sparrow's passing. He was such a sweet, loving man, he will be missed by many. My thoughts and prayers are with you during this difficult time.

Monica Grow - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ To the Sparrow Family, What a wonderful man, wonderful coffee partner. We will miss Dave's friendship. Bob Bean

Bob Bean - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM