



Willis Dean Shaw

August 29, 1918 - April 20, 2014

Willis Dean Shaw, 95, of Fayetteville, died April 20, 2014 at Circle of Life Hospice, Springdale, Arkansas. He was born August 29, 1918 in Custer County, Oklahoma to George Howard and Eva Lena Shepard Shaw. He spent the happiest years of his life with his wife of 72 years, Helen Lorene Dodd, who preceded him in death.

He is survived by two sons and their families, Bobby and wife Diane of Springdale, Dennis and wife Evelyn of Tontitown; four grandchildren, Sherri Dillard and husband Jeff of Fayetteville, Brian Shaw and wife Lynn of Fayetteville, Jason Shaw and wife Jennifer of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Damon Shaw of Fayetteville; eight great-grandchildren, Austin and Ashlyn Dillard, Connor, Mason, Jacob, Caitlyn, Spencer and Ainsleigh Shaw.

Willis was a highly respected business leader in Arkansas. His name was most identified with Willis Shaw Express of Elm Springs, a company he founded in 1938 with its beginnings as Willis Shaw Produce. Willis Shaw Express developed into one of the nation's most successful specialized truckload carriers. After selling the company to Del Monte in the early 1970's, he worked for a time as Vice President of Distribution Systems, Inc., Del Monte's transportation holding company. Willis participated with a family and employee group, Shaw Investors, to repurchase Willis Shaw Express in 1983. Four years later the company was

acquired by Comcar Industries and continues to operate out of Elm Springs.

As with most of his generation, growing up in the Great Depression had a profound effect on him. He moved to Texas at the age of 16 to find work and there joined the National Guard. During these difficult years, Willis exhibited the beginnings of a lifetime embracing the entrepreneurial spirit, trying a variety of jobs. He worked with Elm Springs friends in a gold mine in California; he transported paying passengers to California in his Model A Ford; he transported apples from Ruppel Farm in Fayetteville to markets in Oklahoma. He also hauled coal from Clarksville in his flatbed truck at night and then, in the daytime, cleaned and refitted it with benches to transport rural children to and from the Elm Springs school.

Prior to starting Willis Shaw Express, he and his wife Lorene were active in the poultry and produce business of the area. They partnered in Kever and Shaw Feeds, which operated a feed mill, hatchery and poultry farms. Willis was a pioneer in the development of long-haul transportation of live poultry. After he entered the refrigerated transportation business, he introduced several trucking innovations that positively affected the growth of that industry.

As a leader in the transportation industry, he was a founder of the Refrigerated Division of the Truckload Carriers Conference of the American Trucking Association and was active in the Arkansas Transportation Association. Willis also served 12 years as Regional Director of the National Defense Reserve for Arkansas, under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Transportation. In 1988, he received the President's Award from the Northwest Arkansas Transportation Society for his leadership in the industry. In 1998, a group of more than a hundred former employees honored him with a surprise banquet and presented him with a trophy engraved "To Our Hero", with the added inscription "Those of us who

were your drivers in the 1950's have observed your activities into the 90's and we always think of you as a symbol of honor and integrity."

Through the years, Willis served on numerous boards: Springdale Savings and Loan Association, Tri-State Motor Transit, Arkansas Truck Lease Company, Arkansas White Motor Company, First National Bank of Springdale and The Bank of San Francisco. As an active community citizen, he was a member of the Beaver Lake Development Board which helped establish the Beaver Lake Reservoir, the Board of the Springdale School District for 10 years and the Board of the Springdale Memorial Hospital for 29 years and the Board of the Rodeo of the Ozarks. In 2007, the new elementary school in the Elm Springs area was named

Willis D. Shaw Elementary School to honor his service and contributions. The Rodeo of the Ozarks Board recognized him in 2008 by asking him to serve as Grand Marshal of the longstanding Fourth of July Parade.

Willis and Lorene were committed to giving back to their community. They valued the gift of education beyond what they were able to attain, and so they established the Willis Shaw Scholarship Fund, which provided college scholarships for more than 100 children of company employees. Longtime members of the Elm Springs Methodist Church before joining the First United Methodist Church of Springdale, they supported both churches. They jointly established the Willis and Lorene Shaw Charitable Trust for the benefit of many local educational, medical and social charities. In addition, they were long-standing supporters of the University of Arkansas Athletic Scholarship Program.

Willis traveled extensively throughout his life and, in his retirement years, winters were spent with his wife Lorene in Palm Springs, California, where they both enjoyed playing golf and entertaining friends and family. In his later

years, he enjoyed being an investor and a trusted advisor to those close to him.

In 2009, he was named to the Arkansas Business Hall of Fame established by the Sam M. Walton School of Business. He was able to enjoy the induction ceremonies in Little Rock at the age of 90, along with many relatives, friends, and former employees.

During his last years at Butterfield Trail Village, his caregivers included Angela Brown, Virginia Daniels, Rhonda Draper, Brenda Dowell, Janice Friend and Evevone Phillips. The Shaw Family wishes to express utmost gratitude for their enriching his final years in such a loving way.

A private burial will be held this week in Elm Springs and the family will have a memorial service at 1 PM on Friday, April 25 at the Springdale First United Methodist Church at 206 West Johnson Street, with a family visitation following in the church atrium.

The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, Willis be remembered in a lasting way with memorial gifts to The Elm Springs United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 8, Elm Springs, Arkansas 72728 or The First United Methodist Church, 206 West Johnson, Springdale, Arkansas 72764.

Funeral arrangements are entrusted to Sisco Funeral Chapel of Springdale.

Online condolences may be left at www.siscofuneral.com

Cemetery Details

Elm Springs Cemetery

101 Lawnview Lane
Springdale, AR 72762

Previous Events

Memorial Visitation

APR **25**. 1:00 PM (CT)

First United Methodist Church
206 W. Johnson Ave.
Springdale, AR 72764
info@firstchurchspringdale.org
<http://www.firstchurchspringdale.org>

Tribute Wall



“ *Willis Dean Shaw*

January 21, 2023 at 02:29 PM



“ *Our sympathy and prayers are with the Shaw family. God bless.
Ken Sisco and family*

Ken Sisco - April 25, 2014 at 01:34 PM



“ *We are deeply saddened at the passing of Willis. He, and the Shaw family had a profound impact on our lives and it will never be forgotten.*

Alav Ha-Shalom. Rest in Peace Willis.

*Marty and Dorothy Geffon
Boise, Idaho.*

Marty Geffon - April 24, 2014 at 11:30 AM



“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with you during this time.*

Tom Reed and family

Tom Reed - April 24, 2014 at 11:23 AM



“ 46 files added to the album *Memories of Willis*



Sisco Funeral Chapel - April 23, 2014 at 03:51 PM

RR

Our prayers are with you. We have many memories of Willis and Lorene. Richard and Alma Roberts

Richard & Alma Roberts - April 25, 2014 at 09:57 AM

TS

“ My mother, Edna Smith, was Willis' assistant for many years. When I was very young, no more than 4, Willis was out of the office and I was snooping around in his office, like little boys did back then, before the internet and video games. Within seconds, on each side of his credenza, were 2 Willis Shaw Frozen Express miniature trucks. Being a boy in 1967, those trucks were unbelievable and I just had to have one. I found out later as an adult, they were used for a Christmas party, or something of the sort.

A few weeks later I was in mom's office and she said, "now Tim, go in Mr. Willis' office and ask him politely if you can have one of those trucks you want so bad". I marched right into Willis' office and said, "Willis, can I have one of those trucks", now wasn't that polite? He replied, "Tim, you can have which ever one you want, or both if you want". Of course mom yelled out, "Only one Tim". I am now 50 years old and I still have that truck and it's proudly displayed in my office, with the other generation Shaw trucks, along side is a picture of mom, Gayla Sue Brown, and Willis Shaw at his induction to the Arkansas Businessman Hall of Fame.

I cannot express what Willis meant to me and my family. He was a true saint, and there will never be another man like Willis Shaw.

Timothy Lon Smith
Dallas, TX

Timothy Lon Smith - April 22, 2014 at 08:05 PM

LF

“ Dear family, So saddened to hear of Willis' passing. I will forever be thankful for the friendship he and Lorene showed to my parents, Helen and Raymond Fisher. May God's grace shine upon you all during this difficult time. Larry and Marilyn Fisher --Salem, Oregon

larry fisher - April 22, 2014 at 06:41 PM

LS

“ *Our prayers to the Willis Shaw family at this time. God bless you!*

Lee Scott

Lee Scott - April 22, 2014 at 05:41 PM

MR

“ *Willis Shaw was a great businessman, but, much more. He was a true gentleman, a man who genuinely cared for people and who reflected Christ-like character to those he encountered along the way. He was truly devoted to his wife, and served her in sickness and health. While a gentle spirit, he was a great leader and effective team builder in his business and community. He created a family culture in all of his spheres of influence. He will be missed by all who knew him. It was my great pleasure to have worked with him as an advisor for 20 years.*

Mike Robinson, CPA Little Rock

Mike Robinson - April 22, 2014 at 03:51 PM

JF

“ *Bob & Diane,*

You are in my thoughts and prayers. Willis was a wonderful man!

Mom really enjoyed visiting with him at Butterfield---re-living the good old days, I'm sure.

Judy (Tucker) Fullington

Judy Fullington - April 22, 2014 at 11:28 AM



DL

“ Dear Bob and Diane: We were saddened to read of the loss of you dad/father-in-law. But we were also incredibly inspired by his amazing life. Truly it is a goal to live well and to leave people who care that we lived and contributed to others' lives while we are here. His life is an amazing testimonial to his faith, his love of family and community and his exuberant spirit. May God bless you with peace as you adapt to this loss. You're in our hearts and prayers. Dave and Elaine Longer

D E Longer - April 22, 2014 at 11:03 AM

SS

I am truly sorry to hear of Mr. Shaw's passing. My Father drove a truck for him for quite a while, even though his health was bad and he was not suppose to be driving long distances Mr. Shaw knew that our Family depended on his employment. My Father spent a LONG time in the hospital before his death and Mrs. Shaw was a regular there at the hospital to support my Mom. I still remember their kindness to our Family and will Always be grateful!
Sandra (Davis) Skaggs

Sandra Skaggs - April 22, 2014 at 09:01 PM