



Kendell Wooldridge Wherry

April 13, 1926 - March 4, 2016

On a crisp, beautiful Friday morning, March 4, the Wherry family of Seminole County surrendered to Heaven our longtime friend, husband, father and hero, Kendell Wooldridge Wherry. A pillar of the legal community in central Florida for over 50 years, Kendell is best known for his commitment to uphold the rule of law, fairness, ethics and civility in courts and legal proceedings as a representative of the U.S. Department of Justice. In the early 1960's, Kendell was one of the original Assistant United States Attorneys in the newly established Middle District of Florida, and hired by the first United States Attorney for the District, Eddie Boardman, an appointee of President John F. Kennedy.

Kendell was born to Byron and Dorothy Wherry in Chicago, Illinois, on April 13, 1926, joining the family as their second son. The family lived within blocks of the iconic University of Chicago and expansive Lake Michigan where Kendell enjoyed swimming in the summer. With a powerful build and a commanding height of 6'2", he was a star athlete in high school, excelling in many sports, but his focus was baseball. His ambition was to play professional baseball, however his obligation to his country called first. Immediately upon graduation from Hyde Park High School in Chicago, Kendell enlisted in the U.S. Navy and soon was off to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center as he prepared to serve for two years during World War II. His duty was dangerous, serving aboard the minesweeper, USS Fitch, in the Pacific Ocean. With Kendell on board, the Fitch swept for mines at the entrance of Tokyo Bay and his ship was present on the historic day when the Empire of Japan surrendered to the United States and General Douglas MacArthur aboard the USS Missouri.

Returning to his home in Illinois, Kendell embarked on his baseball career, and over the course of two years he played in the minor leagues for several teams, eventually securing a spot on the farm team for the famed Brooklyn Dodgers organization. Unfortunately, a serious leg injury dashed his hopes to move up to the major leagues. Kendell then turned his attention to college and enrolled at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. He was a political science major and upon graduation, enrolled in law school at the University of Miami. There, good fortune smiled upon him when he met the love of his life, the beautiful Lila Abraham who was working at the school as administrative assistant to the Dean of the Law School. On October 4, 1957, they were married in Miami and such began

a partnership that would last nearly 59 years.

In 1958, Kendell graduated from law school and was admitted to the Florida Bar. The newly married couple moved to Tampa where they began careers serving the federal judiciary of the Southern District of Florida. Hired practically as a team, Kendell worked for Chief Judge Barker and Lila worked for Judge Whitehurst. There they had the opportunity to see the federal court practitioners in action and develop many friendships. Kendell had his heart set on becoming a federal prosecutor and began inquiring about the possibilities. Very few positions existed at that time and the door did not open. After two years, Kendell accepted the opportunity to join the legal department of Pan American Airlines at their office on Patrick Air Force Base in Brevard County. Successful in that job, Kendell earned the respect and friendship of many, including esteemed attorney Hervey Yancey with the Miami law firm, Smathers & Thompson. Once Hervey learned that Kendell aspired to become a federal prosecutor, he took action and contacted his dear friend, Eddie Boardman, the newly appointed United States Attorney for the newly created Middle District of Florida. Things clicked into place this time. Kendell was hired as an Assistant U.S. Attorney on November 17, 1964 and he returned to Tampa to join Boardman's team. Boardman was not just a boss to his assistants, but rather he took them under his wing and mentored them in all aspects of lawyering, professionalism, and leadership. It formed a bond that was never broken.

Back in Tampa, Kendell was in familiar surroundings in federal court. Most notable among his colleagues was Assistant U.S. Attorney E.J. Salcines, a Tampa native and person whose skill and devotion to the practice of law, to the community, and to his family deeply impressed Kendell. Throughout Kendell's life, he treasured his connection to E.J., who later became the elected State Attorney for Hillsborough County and an appellate judge, and all the goodness he represents. In 1966, Kendell was assigned to open the Middle District's Orlando office, and he and Lila then settled their family there. By then, three children had been born: Kendell Todd, Karin Dorothy, and Kim Lila.

Orlando had become a hub of legal activity, with the assignment of U.S. District Judge George C. Young to the Division. Judge Young, a Naval Officer during WWII, was brilliant and demanding, and he ran a tight ship. Boardman's decision to assign Kendell to Orlando to keep pace with Judge Young proved to be a strategic win for the U.S. Attorney's Office and the judiciary. For nearly two decades, Kendell led the Orlando office as it grew in size and complexity of caseload. According to U.S. District Judge Harvey Schlesinger, a former Assistant U.S. Attorney colleague and friend, Judge Young and Kendell Wherry were the "dynamic duo" of the Middle District in those early years.

Success in the office was also due to the great work of Kendell's friend and colleague, Robert Leventhal who joined Kendell later in the 1960's. Further into the 1970's, opportunities were opening for women lawyers. The U.S. Attorney's Office in Orlando, with Kendell at the helm, hired Elizabeth "Libby" Jenkins, one of the brightest graduates from

the University of Florida. Libby broke new ground and her successes were noted by many, including Kendell's two daughters who were then in high school. Kendell counseled his daughters to consider a career in law, and as proof that women matched or exceeded anyone else's talent, he pointed to Libby Jenkins. Encouraged by her example, Karin and Kim continued their education, both becoming lawyers. Kendell's choice proved to be prophetic as Libby eventually was elevated to the federal bench as a U.S. Magistrate Judge.

During Kendell's 44 years in the U.S. Attorneys Office, he developed friendships with agents in all the law enforcement agencies he served, in Washington, D.C. at the headquarters office of the Justice Department, in every Division of the Justice Department, by numerous U.S. Attorneys General, by the Director of the FBI, by the Director of the Secret Service, to name a few. Simply, Kendell enjoyed his work and the people with whom he worked. He never stopped thinking of his colleagues and friends, even long after he retired in 2008, in particular retired Secret Service Agent Dick Hulcher, with whom he handled countless cases over the course of his 44 years of unbroken service as an Assistant U.S. Attorney. Kendell was honored with many awards during the course of his career, but the capstone occurred in 2014 with the AUSA Attorney's Association creating the Kendell W. Wherry Award, to be given to a current AUSA who demonstrates extraordinary commitment to the mission of the office.

Kendell is preceded in death by his parents, Byron and Dorothy, and his brother, Bryon, Jr. He is survived by his beautiful wife of nearly 59 years, Lila, his three adult children, Kendell (Michelle), Karin, and Kim (Mitch), eight grandchildren, Hannah, Kayla, Marshall, Dana, Nick, Natalya, McKenna, and Kendell Kate, and sisters-in-law Gisela Wherry and Eleanor and JoAnn Abraham.

To honor Kendell, a memorial service will be held on Monday, March 21, 2016 from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. at the Knowles Memorial Chapel, Rollins College. Inurnment will follow the service at Cape Canaveral National Cemetery in Brevard County. Arrangements are being handled by DeGusipe Funeral Home in Maitland.

Cemetery

Cape Canaveral National Cemetery

5525 US-1 North
Mims, FL, 32754

Comments



“ My sincerest condolences to the Wherry family. Losing a loved one in death is painful. It is such times like this that we should look to the Almighty God for comfort. Psalm 34:18 says, "Jehovah is close to the brokenhearted; He saves those who are crushed in spirit."

May your reflection on this promise and your many fond memories of Kendell give you the strength you need to endure this difficult time.

Kim - 6 hours ago



“ Civil Division - U.S. Attorney's Office - SDFL purchased the Lavender Reflections Spray for the family of Kendell Wooldridge Wherry.



Civil Division - U.S. Attorney's Office - SDFL - 23 hours ago



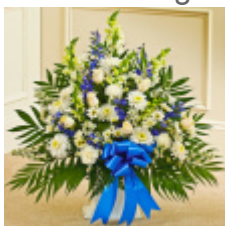
“ Treasured Lilies Spray was purchased for the family of Kendell Wooldridge Wherry.



Yesterday at 04:59 PM



“ Blue & White Sympathy Floor Basket was purchased for the family of Kendell Wooldridge Wherry.



March 17 at 10:33 AM



“ Floor Plant for Sympathy was purchased for the family of Kendell Wooldridge Wherry.



March 17 at 10:32 AM



“ Floor Plant for Sympathy was purchased for the family of Kendell Wooldridge Wherry.



March 16 at 12:11 PM



“ I had the honor of meeting Kendall Wherry in November 2002, when I joined the U.S. Attorney's Office in Orlando. On my first day, I was taken office to office to meet people for very short introductions. When I got to Kendall's office, Kendall welcomed me to the practice and insisted I sit so he could get to know me. Not being shy, I asked Kendall my fair share of questions to get to know him and his background. Kendall was humble about his service to the people of the Middle District of Florida and United States.

Over the years Kendall and I would talk about the law, current events, and his Ford Bronco. When it came to the law, Kendall consistently gave sage legal and ethical advice. I often laughed when Kendall pulled slip opinions from the mountain of paper on his desk like a magician pulling a rabbit out of a hat. The opinion always addressed the issue and I never found Kendall to be wrong on the law.

I had several opportunities to watch Kendall ply his craft in court and learned a lot from him. Kendall was the gentleman prosecutor and a public servant that all public servants should aspire to emulate.

Rest in peace and may God bless your family during this difficult time.

Vince Citro

Vince Citro - March 16 at 11:59 AM



“ I met Kendall Wherry in November 1989 when I joined the Civil Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Orlando. I had been a criminal prosecutor as a JAG Officer in the U.S. Air Force and the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office. I knew nothing about civil litigation. Kendall was an AUSA in the Civil Division at that time. I was brought to his office where he was sitting at his desk dressed in a short sleeve light blue dress shirt and striped tie reading a slip opinion from the 11th Circuit. His office was crowded with old federal style oak bookcases jammed with law books of various types, federal registers, ALR's, slip opinions and the like. He looked up and studied me with curiosity. I introduced myself and told him I'd been assigned a deposition (I had never taken a deposition) and wasn't really sure what I was supposed to do. He shuffled through various books and documents on his desk, found a copy of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, pushed it in my direction and said "read Rule 30 and come back and see me." So began a long and close professional relationship that would last until Kendall retired in 2008.

Over the years I spent many hours in Kendall's office talking about current events, baseball and the law, and always leaving more knowledgeable than I had entered. Kendall took me "under his wing" and taught me by example that representing the United States came with high expectation and responsibility; that the work was hard but the rewards were great. I've tried over the years to follow the high example he set; an example of honesty, integrity and character. All young lawyers would benefit from such a mentor.

Rest in peace Kendall, I learned much from you and enjoyed our time together.
Ralph Hopkins

Ralph Hopkins - March 15 at 09:18 AM



“ it was late August, 1971 and I approached the Federal Courthouse/Post office for the first time--a little fear of the unknown. All the windows were wide open and it was HOT. I learned that the air conditioning broke every Summer. Mrs West greeted me and showed me to my new office piled with case files. She said Kendall was in trial and I would be meeting a Postal Inspector --Joe Baessler--shortly. I am sure I engendered confidence when I asked what was a Postal Inspector. I got ready for a mail fraud trial and Kendall tried his case. 2 weeks later we finally met. He was a role model-mentor-friend and teacher. I have told people that being a Federal Prosecutor was the best job I ever had. The people I met-worked with-and appeared before changed my life. Those who were mentors and helped mold me professionally were giants to me--Bill James-Judge Young-but head of that group was Kendall. Thank you Kendall for being part of my life. Bob Leventhal

bob leventhal - March 15 at 07:46 AM



“ I met Kendall in 1973 upon joining the United States Attorney's office. Until 1980 I had the honor and privilege of working with Kendall. For most of that time he was the Managing Assistant US Attorney in Orlando. I knew him as a friend, a mentor, and a man of the highest integrity and professionalism.

Kendall's contribution to the citizens of Central Florida cannot be overstated. His leadership of the United States Atty.'s office in the early days the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida Orlando Division created the foundation for the standard of excellence of federal prosecutors for which we can all be proud.

Rest in peace dear friend.

Mark L. Horwitz

Mark L. Horwitz - March 15 at 05:32 AM



“ Anne Gaucher is following this tribute.

Anne Gaucher - March 15 at 12:46 AM