



Sheldon B. Smith

December 8, 1944 - December 27, 2019

Sheldon Smith was born in his beloved Chicago on December 8, 1944 to Molly (Goodman) and David Smith. Sheldon never used his middle name and was known as “Shelly” to his childhood friends, grandchildren and by his loving wife of 25 years, Christine. According to her, GOD must have smiled when Sheldon was born because he had a knack for bringing out the smiles in others!

Sheldon graduated from Mather High School (Chicago, IL) in January 1963 and the University of Illinois, Chicago in 1967. He was an epidemiologist for the U.S. Public Health Service before joining the Stanley H. Kaplan Educational Centers. Ltd. in 1971, where he opened 26 educational centers in 11 states and conducted marketing and advertising campaigns to introduce the high school, college and general population to the concept of test preparation. He served as the Coordinator for Kaplan Centers throughout the Midwest and West and had direct oversight of all new centers west of the Mississippi River. He later concentrated on his six educational centers throughout the Chicagoland area and was extremely proud of his singular accomplishment of coordinating and conducting more campus classes at the high school level than any of the other 150 Kaplan Centers nationwide.

In 1992, Sheldon established the TestWatch Research Institute Ltd., a not-for-profit corporation, which conducted programs in 36 Chicago area high schools

and created a highly successful and innovative approach to test preparation through the development of TestWatch Test Prep (“TWTP”). He authored TWTP’s “Psychological Motivational Program” and developed a highly acclaimed In-Service training program to facilitate Chicago Public School teachers’ awareness of test taking strategies and techniques for various admission testing programs. He worked in this field until his retirement in 2006, when he turned his attention to using his skills for eBay sales of gambling memorabilia!

From 2006 until his passing, Sheldon was a well-established dealer of casino collectibles and sold extensively on eBay as “onenevadadollar,” which was a tip of the hat to what was his primary chip collection. In 2008, Sheldon and Christine relocated to Las Vegas, Nevada and his collection, contacts and interests in this field expanded. He not only bought and sold for “Team Smith” (as he liked to call their partnership) but for his growing number of consignors, both national and international. When Sheldon took an interest in something, he worked to achieve not only competence but mastery!

Sheldon was a man who was curious about life, was always learning and encouraging others to do the same. He was an avid, eclectic reader who embraced many genres. He was a man of many interests – he loved tennis and running (he ran two Chicago Marathons); being Christine’s most-forgiving partner in their bi-weekly bridge games with friends; playing poker and blackjack (winning or finishing “in the money” in quite a few tournaments along the way); watching “The Big Bang Theory” and PBS! He loved going to Cubs, Bears and Notre Dame games but, in later years, settled for watching them on TV. For years, he traveled with Illinois friends to Cubs Spring Training games in the Cactus League in Arizona and he enjoyed those trips immensely. Sheldon especially loved collecting casino chips and other gambling memorabilia. He loved the chip collecting hobby and was an enthusiastic and patient mentor to chip collectors here and abroad, making friends all around

the USA, Europe and Asia. He was a Life Member and a huge supporter of the national Casino Chip and Gaming Token Collectors' Club (the CC>CC, d/b/a The Casino Collectibles Association (CCA)) and served four years as its Vice-President, having previously served as its Educational Director and Publicity Director for many years. He also served eight years as the President of the Southern Nevada Casino Collectibles Club in Las Vegas, Nevada. Until recently, he also served on the Board of Directors for the Museum of Gaming History and was instrumental in recruiting many of its Advisory Board members from local Las Vegas and Nevada gaming and governmental entities. He was especially interested in the history of casinos, especially those in Nevada and authored many articles that were published in the Journal of Antiques and Collectibles and "Gaming Today."

In all of his endeavors, Sheldon relied on his communication skills, active listening and keeping an open mind for building rapport. He always tried to think of ways to "do" something rather than come up with reasons why they couldn't be done. He believed in giving each person respect, whether he agreed or disagreed with their position and considered and honored people's differences. In every instance, he conducted himself in a manner such that each member felt they could contribute to the whole and were important to the organization. Sheldon was committed to diversity, ethical practices and respectful dealing with one another and valued performance over promises, function over form and cooperation over divisiveness. He firmly believed in giving a "voice" to those who didn't have a voice otherwise and was direct and clear in his pursuit, no matter the venue, of excellence.

Sheldon is survived by his wife, Christine (Mandracia Kassak) Smith; three children and seven grandchildren and many other well-loved family members: Stephen and Brenda (Mobile) Smith (children, Hannah and Matthew Smith); Jennifer (Smith) and Doug Freymark (children, Will and Lane Freymark); and

Jeff Kassak (children, Kory, Derek and Shanna Kassak). Sheldon is also survived by his brother and sister-in-law, Irwin and Shirley (Rosenthal) Smith and nephews and nieces, Jason and Lisa Smith (children, Grant, Miles and Nolan Smith) and Todd Smith (ex-wife, Melissa and children, Braydon and Trevor Smith); brother Edward Mandracia and nieces (Jennifer and Candace Mandracia) Also included in Sheldon's family are Susan (Levinson) Smith and Denise (Southern Kassak) and Jarrod Walker (daughter, Lyndsey Walker) who remained part of his "heart-family" despite divorces and remarriage! Sheldon had a well-blended family because he had enough love to spread around both inside and outside traditional familial bonds.

Sheldon was a loving and hands-on grandfather who showered all of his family with love, affection, humor, support and encouragement. He reveled in their many accomplishments and activities from their first steps to first dates; first cars, first loves and first honors; from all levels of school sports team participation to youth swim meets; to high school and college graduations; to first offices, first promotions and first businesses to first bets at casino table games! He sat on many bleachers, concert chairs, lawn chairs and sports stadiums, in all kinds of conditions and weather. He drove for hours or flew across states to watch his children and grandchildren (the "kids") participate in and enjoy their activities. He was the proudest father and grandfather in the world! Although Sheldon called Christine the "cheerleader," Sheldon was the "team captain!" He offered advice, direction and correction with fairness and kindness and always with an accepting, loving manner. Although he liked to call himself "MR. NO," the "kids" (and his friends) knew him as the "go to guy" who was always ready to help and more than able to give sound advice, when asked. He changed diapers, replaced toilets, hung pictures, soothed hurt feelings with great care and gave great rubs, had an enormous smile and twinkly eyes that lit up when one of his "kids" walked into the room, emailed him, texted him or called him on the phone. They were the loves of his life and he counted them all as his biggest and best blessings!

Sheldon will be greatly missed by all who knew him. He wanted to live forever here on earth because he loved life so much; but he will always be alive not only in Heaven but in our hearts and in our minds, where we will hear his voice in times of both trouble and joy! GOD BLESS SHELDON SMITH! He made the world better by being in it and those he leaves behind thank GOD for him!

A visitation will be from 1:00 p.m. until time of services at 2:30 p.m. Saturday, January 11, 2020 at Burnett-Dane Funeral Home, 120 W. Park Ave. (Rt. 176, one block west of Milwaukee Ave.) in Libertyville. For info: 847-362-3009 or share a memory at www.burnettdane.com.

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 11. 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM (CT)

Burnett-Dane Funeral Home
120 West Park Avenue
Libertyville, IL 60048
(847) 362-3009

Memorial Service

JAN 11. 2:30 PM (CT)

Burnett-Dane Funeral Home
120 West Park Avenue
Libertyville, IL 60048
(847) 362-3009

Tribute Wall

GS

“ *I think this could be the Sheldon Smith who worked with the CDC. If so, I remember him fondly. The Sheldon I knew worked with Kaplan. Please confirm. I can't say more until I know it's him. Text me at 7142926261. Thanks George Smietana*

George Louis Smietana - September 27, 2025 at 05:24 PM

“With regrets that we didn’t make the memorial service, Russ and I are thinking of Sheldon, Chris and his entire family and sending our most sincere condolences. I, especially, hold wonderful memories of Sheldon over years as both colleague and friend. I first knew Sheldon through his leadership with Stanley Kaplan. He became a leader in both the Illinois Association for College Admission Counseling and the National Association for College Admission Counseling. He was pivotal (and a pioneer) in building bridges that encouraged NACAC to partner with corporate sponsors to underwrite national conferences and student scholarships. That happens all the time now, but at the time it was seen as pretty radical!

My first national conference presentation was made with Sheldon at NACAC in 1982 – a report of an early comparative study he and Betty Schneider did at the University of Chicago Laboratory High School on the effects of test preparation programs on student college entrance test scores. Since then, our association through professional work grew over many years, as did our friendship.

After Sheldon and Chris moved to Las Vegas we were able to visit them a few times. We were amazed by their personal collection of valuable casino memorabilia, and we had an absolutely marvelous Sheldon-guided visit to the old Las Vegas strip, where I particularly remember we were introduced to one of the icons of early casino gambling. I am so happy that we were able to have lunch with Sheldon and Chris as recently as this past April – appropriately a 2 for 1 buffet at a casino frequented by the “locals.”

Sheldon was warm, kind loyal and generous of spirit. He showed just how much he valued each of his friendships and never hid the love of his family! I will always treasure that special smile that extended to his eyes. His special laugh will always stay with me.

I cannot end without the singular Sheldon anecdote that is most vivid in my mind. I traveled back to Chicago with Sheldon in his

smallish car, following a National NACAC Conference in Milwaukee many years ago. At the conference, Sheldon had hosted a Stanley Kaplan reception for school counselors (an invitation to which was a treasured commodity) at which Lucite desk clocks were being given out as gifts to those attending. Each clock was wrapped in tissue paper inside a small white gift bag. Quite a few clocks were left after the reception and they were put into a large cardboard box that was “strapped” to the trunk of his car for the trip home. A few of us had commented that this might not be the most secure arrangement. Sure enough, on the way home the box slowly worked its way loose, landing in the middle of traffic on I94 and spilling clocks, bags, and tissue paper across several lanes of heavy traffic. The image of Sheldon dodging traffic to try to retrieve the detritus will always stay with me – and it was to no avail, since a Wisconsin trooper quickly arrived and issued Sheldon a ticket for littering the highway.

I know Sheldon is looking down at all of us with that warm smile. This isn't the hand I expected he would be dealt, but I hope he'll save a seat at the table for the next time we see each other. Mary Lee and Russ Hoganson

Mary Hoganson - January 11, 2020 at 04:20 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Sheldon B. Smith.*



January 10, 2020 at 06:27 PM

DH

“ Denise Hockley-Cann purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Sheldon B. Smith.



Denise Hockley-Cann - January 08, 2020 at 07:58 PM

GD

“ Grayslake North English Department purchased the Large Basket Garden for the family of Sheldon B. Smith.



Grayslake North English Department - January 08, 2020 at 09:44 AM

CS

“ Sheldon was a loving father, grandfather, friend and the most wonderful, sensitive, considerate and supportive husband imaginable. I thank GOD for him and for allowing me to be his wife for more than 25 years. I loved him from the moment I met him and I will love him until the moment I die and into eternity. Sheldon was the love and light of my life and my best friend forever. Along with our wonderful family and friends, I will miss him. GOD bless Sheldon! Christine Smith



Christine Smith - January 05, 2020 at 09:11 PM