

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR DAVID SHELLENBERGER

October 15, 2011

Freeland Hall

WELCOME:

I welcome you to this service, a moment in time when we gather to celebrate the life and mourn the death of David Shellenberger. Today we acknowledge the impact of his life on our lives. We come to honor his achievements, celebrate the joyful moments spent together, and express our sorrow at his death.

REFLECTIONS ON LIFE AND DEATH:

We are here today to celebrate David's remarkable life and to mourn. He did not want us to be sad – although he understood the need to grieve, he wanted us to gather and celebrate, to be together, to share our memories and our joy about his life. We are here because we need each other, because death always reminds us of our own mortality, because we have questions about the meaning of life and death.

We are here to puzzle out answers. We wonder why human suffering and death come to us all, why families and friends must go through such loss, why life cannot be easier.

This time is sacred, sacred because life is a gift which we do not earn. And this time is also personal, because our memories of David touch each of us in unique ways.

Death cancels everything, it seems, but the question of meaning. In every moment of our lives, we search for meaning, and as we seek to find the meaning of life and death, we are led into greater and greater mystery, mystery which only yields when we surrender the search.

We can only speculate about meaning beyond death, but we find comfort in the meaning we find in life, meaning we hold in common.

Though death has taken David's physical presence from us, his spiritual presence abides with us, both in our individual hearts and in the heart of this community. David Shellenberger touched many lives with his character, his generosity, his great warmth, his strength, his leadership, his struggles, and his vision of what could be.

Our lives, our spiritual presence, influence those around us and alter the shape of the world. David's spiritual presence is here today in the lives of all of you, for you loved him, were sometimes angry with him, admired him, were perplexed by him.

All our lives have been touched by this complex, passionate, compassionate man, whom we memorialize today. And he lives on, for our lives reflect his touch and his influence.

Kahlil Gibran reminds us of this truth in these words:

*"You would know the secret of death. But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life? If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life. For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one".*

David's influence is not lost; it has become part of the fabric of all existence, and though our memories of his will permeate the rest of our lives, time will carry his legacy beyond memory into the stream of history.

The sense of loss which David's death has caused is real and deep. The pain of physical loss is sharp and tears and anger are a natural response. Our grief reveals our deep loss. And we miss his physical presence, even the demands and stresses of that presence.

In our sorrow, we express those things which death cannot erase---our memories and experiences of love and joy. So we both celebrate David's life and weep for the loss of his physical presence. In doing so, we begin the process of healing.

MEMORIAL PORTRAIT (Kit reads writings of friends and family)

COMMUNITY SHARING (15-20 minutes, with Kit monitoring)

SONG

CLOSING WORDS:

David's ashes will be scattered by you, his friends and family. But his life will continue in your memories. You loved him, you continue to love him, you will continue to be influenced by him. Your grief, your emotion, your life with him does not end today. Remember this and be gentle with one another.

You will relive your pain many times and this is natural. It is our nature as human beings to carry with us the experience of love, in all its joy and sorrow, and to learn from its teachings.

May we learn from David's life and death. May we live on in the spirit in which he lived, with humor, courage, fortitude, generosity and love.

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