



## Robert L Spellman Jr

May 26, 2021

Husband of 62 years. Father to five girls. Man of God.

Robert Spellman was born April 8, 1937, in Grandfield, Okla., and grew up in Urbana, Ohio, a town he fiercely loved, the son of Robert Sr. and Flossie (Crane) Spellman, with his late brother, Bill, and his brother, Hugh. He graduated from Urbana High School.

He died on March 12, 2021, peacefully and surrounded by family.

He went to Baldwin Wallace University in Berea, Ohio, where he received a bachelor's in history and met the love of his life, Susan Edwards. They married at the chapel there on Dec. 27, 1958, and started to build a life full of family and adventures.

Robert had three distinguished careers in his life. His first chapter was as a newspaper reporter, including at the Democrat and Chronicle in Rochester, N.Y., where he was part of a Gannett team that produced "The Road to Integration" project that won a special Pulitzer citation in 1964. After earning a master's degree in urban planning at Michigan State University, he began his next work chapter, first as a public servant in Rochester, N.Y., serving in roles including director of Monroe County Pure Waters and urban renewal director for the city. His projects, including the senior towers along Lake Avenue and

St. Paul Street, are still landmarks in the city. After he moved into the private sector, he managed projects in Cleveland, Ohio, and in Columbus was on the Two Nationwide Plaza development team. While working, he earned his law degree at Cleveland State University. A friend needed someone to teach a law class for him in the mid-1980s and asked Robert to take over. Robert fell in love with teaching, a profession he watched Susan excel at over the life of their marriage, and began his third career in academia. He became a distinguished communications law and journalism professor at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, including a year as a Fulbright Fellow in Shanghai.

Yet with all his success in work, he would tell you his biggest accomplishment was his marriage and family. His 62-year marriage was a model of how to build a Christian life full of unconditional love. He relished Susan's success in her career and liked nothing else but to hear about accomplishments big and small by his daughters, their spouses, his 10 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. And he was a rock of support for all of them when the challenges of life may have seemed in the way. While he and Susan traveled the world, their favorite trips were to their daughters' homes to see the lives they were building.

He was a faithful member of First Christian Church of Anna, serving as an elder and Sunday school teacher. He also was a lifetime learner, starting a master's degree in New Testament studies at 80 through Johnson University in Knoxville, Tenn., continuing until his recent illnesses.

In addition to his wife, Susan, he is survived by his daughters Virginia (Michael) Black of Columbus, Ohio; Robin (Russ) Fahlberg of Dunlap, Ill.; Elizabeth (Joe) Lillian of Overland Park, Kan.; Catherine (Chad) Roberts of Apple Valley, Minn.; and Zhushan "Mandy" Li (Feng Hong) of Newton, Mass. Also his brother, Hugh (Cynthia) Spellman, and his sister-in-law, Carolyn

Spellman, of Urbana, Ohio; his sister-in-law Jacqueline Howald of Rootstown, Ohio; grandchildren Michael (Crystal) Black, Christopher Black, Jessica (Salvador) Ramirez, David Lalo, Jenna Lillian, Morgan Lillian, Kiegan Roberts, Tristan Roberts, Susan Hong and Robert Hong; and great-granddaughters Cadence, Hallie, Makayla, Arianna and Aurora.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Susan Spellman Memorial Scholarship Fund at Johnson University, the Poshard Foundation or First Christian Church of Anna would be appreciated.

The family will host a memorial service at 3:00pm on Saturday, May 29, 2021 at the First Christian Church in Anna with Pastor Joseph Hawkins officiating. Facebook live streaming will be available.

Family and friends gathering will be from 2:00pm up to the hour of the service.

Inurnment will take place at 10:30am on June 19, 2021 at Oak Dale Cemetery, 319 Patrick Ave., Urbana, Ohio.

Crain Funeral Home in Anna-Jonesboro has been entrusted with the arrangements.

To view the obituary or to leave an online condolence for the family visit [www.crainsonline.com](http://www.crainsonline.com)

# Tribute Wall



“ *Robert L Spellman Jr*

October 23, 2023 at 06:26 AM



“ *The late Prof. Bob Spellman was extremely generous with me as my mentoring friend.. I became friends with him in the mid-1980s, when he joined the SIUC Journalism School as a media law professor to succeed my fatherly mentor, the late Dr. Harry W. Stonecipher, who retired in 1984. He and I regularly met at AEJMC conferences. We always enjoyed shop talk as media law friends. In addition, he made a point of helping me update me on my alma mater. Each time my wife and I visited traveled back to Carbondale, Ill., to visit Dr. and Mrs. Stonecipher, he and his wife, Sue, hosted lunch or dinner for us. It was in the summer of 2008, when I, along with my wife and children, last met him and Sue during our family trip to Carbondale to visit the graves of the late Dr. and Mrs. Stonecipher. Bob and Sue invited me and my family to lunch at Giant City Lodge. It was a memorable gathering for all of us. Personally, I owe Bob a big thank-you for paying special attention to Korean graduate students in journalism and law. I am always grateful for his remarkable dedication and commitment to challenging those Korean students to do better on and off campus. Bob will be sorely missed by all of us. And I'll cherish my fond memories of him as an exceptional friend for a long, long time.*

Kyu Ho Youm - June 10, 2021 at 03:05 AM



“ *Professor Spellman played a central role in my doctoral education at Southern Illinois. He helped me understand journalism law in a way that directed my teaching for more than thirty years, as well as several recent books. I was saddened to learn about his passing. He made such an important contribution to lives of School of Journalism students.*

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**Jeremy Lipschultz** - June 07, 2021 at 05:51 PM

SL

“ I first met Professor Spellman in the office of School of Journalism in 1997. It was the first week of my life in the US. Professor Spellman knew that I was a new student, and started chatting with me. Later he told me, “We are hosting a party this weekend, welcoming international students. You are invited.” I asked if there was a bus I could take to get to his house. He smiled, “Let me call another student. He will give you a ride.”

*That was my first of many parties we had in Professor Spellman’s home. Professor Spellman loved other cultures and genuinely cared for us. That was especially touching for international students far away from their home country.*

*I took the First Amendment course from Professor Spellman and benefited tremendously. It was a tough course for me, and was different from any courses I took before. I personally believe it was a great course to train critical thinking, just like the justices.*

*Later Professor Spellman was away on sabbatical in Shanghai. Before he left for Shanghai, he asked me to draw a Shanghai map by hand to show what was where. That was a time when google map did not exist yet. It was one of many fond memories. We enjoyed reading his Shanghai Reports he regularly emailed us when he was in Shanghai.*

*Over the years after I left SIU, I kept in touch with Professor Spellman. I am saddened to learn Professor Spellman passed away.*

*Professor Spellman, you have never left us. You are in our hearts. We love you. Somewhere in heaven, you are smiling down upon us.*

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Shupeng Li - May 10, 2021 at 12:04 AM

ZW

“ I first met Professor Spellman in 1996, when I came to SIUC for my graduate study in the School of Journalism. For a foreign student still grasping the English language, as well as the new environment, Professor Spellman's mere presence, not to mention his lectures, was rather intimidating. As his research assistant, I spent many hours in the law library to research legal issues and draft summaries. On more than one occasion, his feedback to my research work was "do-over"

*But as time went on, I realized that Professor Spellman was deeply caring, and extremely patient, while striving to maintain a high level of academic rigor. Professor Spellman had a genuine interest in other cultures and always kept an open mind. I looked after his house for a year while he was away teaching in China on a Fulbright grant. He welcomed many of his students to his home on many occasions.*

*I stayed in touch with Professor Spellman and family after I left SIUC in 2000. He was always such a delight to have a conversation with. I will always miss you, professor. Rest In Peace.*

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**Zaigui Wang** - March 29, 2021 at 01:48 AM

LG

“ Professor Spellman was a man who left his mark on all who knew him. I was fortunate to have known him when pursuing my Master's degree at SIUC Journalism school 2001-2003. He was an incredible professor and a compassionate, loving person. He loved Chinese culture and genuinely cared for Chinese students. To this day, many of us still remember the pizza parties he held for students at his residence! Rest in peace, Dr. Spellman. You will be truly missed!

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**Liang Ge** - March 27, 2021 at 02:03 PM

JP

“ *Mr. Spellman was a tremendous guiding force for SIU students. Intimidating, challenging and fair. He made you a better professional. His critiques were constructive and guiding. A compliment was cherished, because you knew it was earned. To this day, one of my professional highlights was him taking the time to pull me aside to simply say "nice job" on a day's coverage at the college paper. From time to time over the years, an email would arrive that always scared me to death for fear he'd caught me being lackadaisical in a task. Within the past year he had reached out to make sure a change in leadership at work hadn't changed my employment. I will miss those emails, but forever know that I'm better at what I do for the time, effort and dedication Mr. Spellman put into educating and challenging his students. My sincere sympathies go out to his family.*

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**John Patterson** - March 27, 2021 at 11:48 AM



“ *I was a student at SIUC.  
Prof. Spellman,  
I wish the deceased to be blessed.*

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**Sanghee Kweon** - March 24, 2021 at 02:31 AM

JK

“ *Bob was my faculty colleague at SIU for all of the 17 years I was on the journalism faculty. I remember him as a staunch ally and advocate for our Asian students and for the cause of justice for all. I enjoyed our hallway talks and always walked away from a meeting with him feeling like we had shared ideas and not simply conversed. Rest in Peace Professor.*

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**Jim Kelly** - March 23, 2021 at 10:54 AM

JW

“ He was a wonderful professor of mine in Graduate School at SIU and gave me a true appreciation and understanding of media law. Now nearly 20 years later, I am often teaching some of the same courses that he pioneered at SIU. (Glad I saved my notes). I will never forget one particular class when another student raised their hand and called him ‘Doctor Spellman.’ He rolled his eyes and with his own brand of dry humor said, “I am not a Doctor...I am a Lawyer.” Rest in peace Professor Spellman. You have made a difference in countless individual’s lives.

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**Jim Wall** - March 23, 2021 at 07:37 AM

JY

“ Professor Spellman held a very special place in our hearts. Around the year of 2000, quite a few Chinese students came to SIUC to pursue Ph.D or Master degrees. Professor Spellman showed his special kindness and care for the group. He and his wife Sue picked up the newly arrived students at the airport, hosted them at their home for a temporary stay. The love and care he held for many of us was unforgettable. I remembered that when I took his law class and when he saw me copy pages on Xerox machine, he generously gave me a copy of his book. Professor Spellman, thank you for providing a friendly department for us. You are greatly missed!

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**Jin Yang** - March 22, 2021 at 08:27 PM

JO

“ Professor Spellman was an incredible mentor as my professor in multiple classes and dissertation adviser at SIU-C in the mid-'90s. He was rigorous but fair, and it was a joy to reconnect as he was preparing to enroll in the master's program at Johnson University. I still quote him to my students, and I am proud to be a part of his educational legacy.

Jerald Ogg  
Martin, TN

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**Jerald Ogg** - March 22, 2021 at 04:45 PM

PB

“ I was a teaching assistant for Professor Spellman during the early 1990s. The things I came to understand more than anything else was that he had a finely calibrated moral compass and lived his integrity. No student ever called him, "Bob," to his face. Even now, 30 years later, I am unwilling to do so. Rest well good man. I extend my heartfelt condolences to his family. I know he will be missed and remembered fondly.

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**Pat Brierton** - March 20, 2021 at 08:52 PM

TJ

“ I am so sorry to hear this. My office was next to Bob's during much of my time there and he was always great to talk to. He was loved by his students, and particularly had quite a group of Asian student fans. I wish your family comfort during this difficult time.

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**Tom Johnson** - March 19, 2021 at 04:00 PM



“ *i was in his legal ethics class, it was so tough. But when me and my classmates finished, it felt like we had climbed Everest. I appreciated that.*



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**Kelsey Marland** - March 19, 2021 at 12:44 PM



“ *When I sat for my final exams in my doctoral program, Mr. Spellman wrote a tough question for the Law section. I had one day in the Law Library to research my answer and 5 hours to write the answer. It was a sweat producing experience. I passed, and was grateful to do so because he taught us well how to do research in the law library.*

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**Ron Stotyn** - March 19, 2021 at 12:01 AM



“ *Professor Spellman taught me many things in law classes that I now teach as a professor in my law classes. I strive to be like him in that he didn't merely teach; he forged students into better people.*

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**Stephen Banning** - March 18, 2021 at 06:55 PM



“ *Bob was more than one of the best professors I had at SIU. He was a mentor and a moral and ethical compass. I heard from him now and then over the years after I graduated. He always had a kind word and a sharp question about whatever I was working on. He touched many lives and he will be missed -- and remembered.*

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**Toby Eckert** - March 18, 2021 at 06:40 PM

LE

“ I was a journalism student at SIUC in the mid-1980s when Professor Spellman first came. I found him very intimidating in the first few weeks. But over time I came to appreciate how precise he was in his instruction and how sparing he was in his praise. He wanted his students to do their own work and to learn. One day, he upbraided me for how I had covered a student government meeting. I was crushed. Later, I found a note in my student mailbox from him with some kind words about a feature story I had written. I was elated. SIUC is far in my past, but Professor Spellman's exacting standards have always stayed with me. Always grateful.

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**Lisa Eisenhauer** - March 18, 2021 at 05:55 PM

KM

“ A fellow former DE staffer informed me of Mr. Spellman's passing. Please know he was an enormous influence on me as a journalism student at SIUC. He pushed me to apply for both a fellowship in Washington D.C. and the PAR Masters program, both of which impacted my career. He was tough but fair and we kept in touch throughout the years. Please accept my deepest sympathies but also know he inspired many during his life on this earth.

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**Kim Clarke Maisch** - March 18, 2021 at 05:51 PM

PE

“ Prof. Spellman may have never known it, but his quiet belief in an academically mediocre college kid made all the difference in the world. Thanks, Prof. Spellman, and God bless.

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**Paul Eisenberg** - March 18, 2021 at 05:50 PM

YH

“ Farewell, our dear friend  
Thy pain has faded away  
Yet thy kind smiles shall last  
Forever fresh like raindrops  
On spring trees that will bloom  
In the world of love for thee

*Yuemin & family*

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**Yuemin He** - March 17, 2021 at 10:37 PM

TW

“ One could not meet Bob without seeing his love of God, devotion to his wife and his love for whomever he was talking to at the moment. Bob always had a smile and a greeting whenever I saw him and I am so thankful for his service to God through First Christian Church of Anna. We'll meet again my friend

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**Tom Whittenberg** - March 17, 2021 at 08:33 AM

DA

“ Until Bob used it in a prayer with the elders, I had never heard the word "sagacious" before. At the conclusion of our prayer time, every elder looked up and stared at Bob and asked, almost simultaneously, what "sagacious" meant. He replied, "wise or wisdom". Bob had asked God to bless the leadership with a sagacious spirit (a spirit of wisdom). Bob forgot more than I will ever know and I was continually aware of his educational pedigree when I was preaching. He was a treasure to the FCC family, a loyal and dedicated servant, generous to a fault, an encourager to this minister and a blessing to God's Kingdom. Rest well brother Spellman.

*Dee Armes*

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**Dee Armes** - March 16, 2021 at 03:30 PM