



Sheldon Knight

SEP 12, 1933 - JUL 14, 2018



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Sheldon Knight, Silicon Valley entrepreneur, inventor and businessman dies at 84. Chicago, IL – Sheldon Knight, a resident of both Chicago, IL and Sunnyvale, CA died of natural causes in his Chicago residence on July 14, 2018. He was 84 years old. Born on September 12, 1933 in Trenton, Missouri, Sheldon was the only child of Sara Velma Knight and Ashley Gulley Knight. Sheldon's life was marked by a quest for knowledge and entrepreneurialism that began at a very young age. He was a mischievous child who kept his stay-at-home mom on her toes. During his youth, he spent most of his afternoons scouring encyclopedia and other reference materials at the local library. It was there that he started to teach himself electronic design and even the chemistry behind explosives. As an elementary school student, he wired the house phone system to an outside speaker so that the whole neighborhood could hear his mother gossip with friends on the phone. He also learned how to build explosives and managed to purchase all the required ingredients from the local 5 and dime, blowing up an outdoor shed in his backyard. Luckily no one was injured. Sheldon graduated from Franklin High School, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1951. A self-described education junkie, Sheldon immediately started at Iowa State as a full-time student in the summer after high school and also began working as an engineer for WOI-TV, the only TV station in Central Iowa, with a viewing audience of 500,000. He had a Hammond organ at home in Cedar Rapids that wouldn't fit in his dorm room, so he made a deal with the TV station to take the organ and let him play with it when the studio was not in use. One night he was playing the organ and the program manager overheard him, very impressed by the music. The program manager invited Sheldon to play weekly solos on air, making Sheldon a bit of a local celebrity. During that time, he was also taking 21 hours of credits and working an additional 40 hours a week as an engineer for KWBG, a radio station in Boone, Iowa. On the side, he played the organ for weddings and other events around town. At 19



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years old, he was fully supporting himself and paying for college on his own. WOI-TV was hired to provide the technical facilities where The Ford Foundation would record a 13-week dramatic series called, "Voice out of Time." Initially, Sheldon was assigned simply to provide technical support. When the New York producer came for a site visit, 19-year old Sheldon took the initiative to ask the producer if he would consider letting him write the background music for the show. So the producer left the script for the first two programs. He asked Sheldon to compose a theme that would tie the 13 programs together and also to produce the music for the first two episodes. Three weeks later, Sheldon played the theme he composed for the producer who said it was perfect. So Sheldon was hired to do the background music for all 13 episodes. After his junior year at Iowa State University, Sheldon's parents moved to Modesto, California, and Sheldon followed them out West, and applied to Stanford University to complete his education. While he was initially rejected, Sheldon met with the admissions director and talked his way into a provisional admission, pending test scores and academic performance. It was highly unusual to be admitted to Stanford for only the senior year, and even more unusual to talk your way into admission. But when Sheldon was determined, he found intelligent and creative ways to achieve what he wanted. At Stanford he received his bachelor's degree in Physics and a master's degree in Electrical Engineering, while concurrently participating in the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corp (AFROTC). Upon graduation from Stanford University in 1955, Sheldon was awarded a distinguished ROTC Cadet citation and was awarded a regular commission in the US Air Force. He was stationed at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey, where he served three years as a pilot and instructor pilot, transporting military personnel and their dependents between the US and Europe. While traveling for the Air Force, Sheldon and a friend decided to take a river cruise along the Mississippi River in New Orleans. While standing at the railing, he met the only other tourist enjoying the scenery in the rain, the love of his life and future wife, Christel Frank. They were married on April 30, 1960 in Syracuse New York. Around the same time, Sheldon resigned his commission from the Air Force, and entered civilian life, working in executive and management positions at American Technology Labs and Quantic



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Industries from 1960 to 1974. Notable achievements throughout his engineering career included 6 patents and the development of the infrared horizon sensor that was used to successfully navigate the Gemini two-man space capsule. Ever the entrepreneur, in 1974 he founded K-Data, Inc., providing consulting and systems for companies to automate payroll processing, project management and other process-oriented systems. While at K-Data, he also became a private futures trader, transforming an initial \$75,000 investment into more than \$1 million in a single year. His trading strategy was based on a theory he developed while studying at Stanford University. His work with Statistical Communication Theory and Information Theory suggested that many of the ideas used to extract weak electrical signals from random noise might be applicable to detecting trading signals buried in the random movements of the financial markets. Over a six year period of trading, he achieved an average rate of return of 106%. Due to his trading successes, he was a frequent contributing author to Futures Magazine and was a speaker in high demand at trading conventions throughout the United States. He continued to dabble with electronics throughout his life time, designing his own do-decahedron speakers for his living room, among other things. He also invented the first computer-based craps machine which he designed and sold to United Coin Machines, a producer of slot machines for casinos in Las Vegas and elsewhere. Throughout his adult life, his primary residence continued to be in Sunnyvale, California with a second home in Tahoe Vista, California. After Christel's death in June 2002, Sheldon acquired a residence in Chicago, IL where he enjoyed drinking Bombay Sapphire martinis while gazing out his floor-to-ceiling windows at the sparkling Chicago skyline and Lake Michigan. He also appreciated the return to his mid-west cultural roots, and his love of first class theater. Sheldon was a member of Mensa, the mathematical honor society and scholastic honor society. His hobbies included skiing, hiking, theater, music and reading. He loved musical theater, in particular Andrew Lloyd Weber. Sheldon is survived by children Karen Knight Dreyfus (Michael) of Berkeley, CA; Nikki Tanis (Dave) of San Jose, CA ; and Stephen Knight of Boston, MA. Lovingly called "Papa", he leaves behind grandchildren Adrienne Dreyfus, Clare Dreyfus, Rory Dreyfus, Marshall Tanis, Blake Tanis, Corey Tanis, Stephen Knight Jr. and Nicholas



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Knight.Sheldon was laid to rest at Skylawn cemetery in San Mateo, California on Sunday, July 22, 2018.



Tribute Wall

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Jim posted:

I've never met Sheldon, but being a Futures trader, I've heard his name and read his material. What a charmed life, truly incredible and highly motivating. Sad of his passing, but we should all hope to have such a rewarding and joyful life. God Speed Sheldon.

January 23 at 3:25 AM

CK

Chris Showler & Mary Kranz posted:

Mary and I send our condolences on Sheldon's passing. He will be remembered.

July 20 at 2:57 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Sheldon by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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