

Smith Bagley: A Catholic dedicated to social justice

Maureen Fiedler | Jan. 7, 2010 NCR Today

Catholics who care about social justice have lost a marvelous, dedicated friend and ally. On Jan. 2, Smith Bagley died from the complications of a stroke at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland. He was 74.

Smith Bagley was an heir to the RJ Reynolds money, but spent his fortune on causes that improved the lives of millions, especially the economically disadvantaged. He was a serious Catholic dedicated to social justice, human rights and peacemaking. His philanthropy funded projects to promote human rights in El Salvador, open U.S. relations with Cuba, abolish the death penalty, create the Superfund to clean up toxic sites and register millions of voters -- to name but a few of his interests.

At one time, Smith Bagley served as the Chairman of the Board of Regents of the Catholic University of America and he received the University's highest honor, the President's Medal.

He and his wife, Elizabeth Bagley, frequently opened their home for fundraisers for numerous Democratic leaders from Ted Kennedy to Barack Obama. They valued his mind and his ideas as much as his funding and hospitality.

I know that hospitality personally. He and his wife hosted a fundraising evening at their home in mid-December for Interfaith Voices, the radio show that I host, at which Kathleen Kennedy Townsend was the featured guest. I met him briefly that evening, although I had known his reputation for years. Even in that brief encounter, I sensed his sharp mind, his wit and his big heart.

Smith Bagley will be sorely missed. His funeral Mass is today (Jan. 7) at Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown in Washington.

Source URL (retrieved on 06/27/2017 - 00:13): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/smith-bagley-catholic-dedicated-social-justice>