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Dennis Joseph Patrick Gallagher

July 1, 1939 ~ April 22, 2022 (age 82)



Dennis Joseph Patrick Gallagher died peacefully at home, Friday April 22, 2022 of natural causes. He is survived by his Brother Tim, his son Daniel, former wife Joanne, and numerous cousins, nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his Father William, his Mother Nellie, and his Daughter Meaghan.

Dennis was born into a first-generation Irish American family, the Gallaghers and Flahertys. William Gallagher Jr. and Nellie Flaherty married and lived in a small North Denver home, where they started a family, having two boys. Dennis and Tim 9 years apart.

Dennis' life was transformed by the Sisters of Loretto at Holy Family High School in North Denver. They coached him to fame as a national runner-up in The Voice of Democracy Oratorical Contest. The Sisters of Loretto and their philosophy of "giving and caring for others" would lay foundation for who Dennis would become.

At Regis University he received his BA in English literature and minored in Latin and Greek. He then went to Catholic University in Washington, D.C. on a J.K. Mullen Scholarship for a MA in speech, linguistics, and comparative philosophy.

While in Washington, Dennis would find the inspiration for his later political journey. Like many people at the time, he heard the call from President John F Kennedy and committed his life to the service of others. One of his fondest memories of his time at Catholic University was meeting Kennedy in person, and sharing a moment, that would solidify his love of Kennedy.

Returning to Colorado, Dennis found himself a job at Regis College teaching, he would remain a professor for over 40 years. At one time he stated he taught over 7000 students during his tenure at Regis. Over the years he would teach speech, communication, Latin, and Greek. But one of his true joys later at Regis was taking student to Ireland each summer. Dennis and Professor Victoria McCabe took hundreds of students to witness Ireland in person, to hear songs, read poems, and immerse themselves in the rich history of such a small place. Dennis was especially proud of the trips when former President

of Regis University Rev Michael Sheeran, S.J. traveled with them, adding his own unique personality to the trip.

In researching his own Irish roots, Dennis began to write a book with his good friend Tom Noel and James Patrick Walsh, "Irish Denver : Images of America" in which they detailed the early history of Irish Immigrants who came to Denver to start a new life.

Along side his carrier as a professor, in 1970 Dennis was approached by long time Democratic captain Dolores Dickman to run as the state representative in North Denver. After a hard-fought primary Dennis was elected to the Colorado House of Representatives which began his 45 years of elected service to the citizens of Denver and Colorado. Dennis served as State Representative from 1970-1974, State Senate from 1974-1995, Denver City Council from 1995-2003, and Denver Auditor from 2003-2015.

Dennis was successful in politics because he understood campaigning directly to the constituents, and building a grassroots organization, was a powerful political force. Those of us who rarely, if ever, hear from or see our representatives can only envy the residents of Northwest and Central Denver. They have been represented by one of the biggest and most visible legislators of all. Dennis was ubiquitous. He haunted bookshops, libraries, secondhand stores, bar mitzvahs, first communions, high school graduations, bars, coffee shops, and funerals. He always walked his districts meeting people one by one, passing out literature door to door, distributing his famously numbered household for Gallagher yard signs, always making sure his mother's house received "number 01". As Dennis always reminded everyone, "You have to ask for the vote.

Dennis' campaigns were traditionally underfunded, and usually opposed by special interests, but he won because of thousands of hours of hard work, and the legion of loyal supporters he amassed during his years of public service. Dennis amazed everyone he met, greeting them in nearly 23 various languages, always asking what's your last name, maiden name or what's your heritage? To which he often responded with a short, sometimes mispronounced attempt, to speak in that language.

While Dennis had numerous pieces of legislation he worked on over the years, he was most proud of the passage of the Gallagher amendment to the State constitution, which protected residential homeowners from ever increasing property taxes. It remained in the constitution until 2020, when Coloradoans voted to repeal the amendment. One of his other great accomplishments was the total reformation of the Denver Auditors office during his 3 terms. Dennis convinced then Mayor John Hickenlooper, who he helped get started in politics, to support changes to the Auditors office. The Charter change greatly expanded the purview of the office and allowed for

performance-based audits. This meant Dennis could report not just when the city misspent taxpayer money, but to give the administration information before the spending of money, hence preventing gross mismanagement and waste. The Denver City Auditors office, during his 12 years, received multiple national recognitions and awards for their forward thinking and successful audits.

After retiring Dennis became troubled by the ever-emerging lack of civility in politics, and the distrust of elected officials. During his tenure he never demonized people with whom he disagreed, and often relished in the opportunity to work with a colleague across the aisle; to make things better for everyone. To him, politics wasn't about personal advancement but about improving the lives of the public. Dennis' guiding motto was the Athenian Oath, from classic Greece. Which can be easily summarized as, "Leave the city in better shape, then when you found it." Thought he might not have admitted it, everyone else universally agrees...he did just that.

Services include a public viewing on Thursday April 28th, from 4pm-8pm at Horan & McConaty located at 3020 Federal Blvd, Denver.

Mass will be said on Saturday April 30th, 11am at St Dominic's Church, 2905 Federal Blvd, Denver.

In lieu of flowers please send a contribution to the "Meaghan Gallagher Scholarship Fund" at Regis University. 3333 Regis Blvd, Denver, Co 80221.

Please share memories and condolences with Dennis' family by signing the Tribute Wall.