



John William Hershiser

September 28, 1939 - October 13, 2009

John William Hershiser

September 28, 1939 - October 13, 2009

John Hershiser, a lifelong commercial printer and former production executive with the Houston Chronicle, died Tuesday after suffering a fall at his home in St. Augustine, Fla. He was 70. Hershiser, who suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), was senior vice president for production when he left the Chronicle after 13 years in 2002. He worked another three years for American Color Graphics, a printing company affiliated with the Chronicle, before retiring. Hershiser was a Marine who took his friendships as seriously as his golf game. Long before computers and Web sites made it easy, Hershiser was a masterful social networker, with his outgoing personality, pleasant nature and concern for others giving him an array of friends that cut across social and professional divides. Hershiser loved card games of all types and was an avid sports fan who was frequently seen at every Houston sporting venue. He had a special enthusiasm for golf and often participated in the pro-am events that precede PGA Tour events. His pro-am team finished first one year at the Shell Houston Open and among the top three at several other tour events. "John Hershiser was a one-of-a kind executive in our business," said Jack Sweeney, Houston Chronicle publisher and president. "He knew printing, operations, sales and, most important, the customer." Longtime friend Carl Main, a former advertising executive for Academy Sports and Outdoors, played golf with Hershiser for years and praised him as "a

man's man" who could always be trusted. Though his tee shots invariably strayed to the right, Hershiser always lived his life straight down the middle, Main said. "Everyone who came into contact with him liked him so much," Main said. "He was a very special guy, a genuinely good person. He had the highest credibility with people. If he told you something, you could count on it. I knew he would always follow through." Chronicle Editor Emeritus Jack Loftis said Hershiser made a quick impact when he was hired by the newspaper in 1989 to take charge of printing operations. Like others who knew him well, Loftis said Hershiser was never reluctant to share an opinion, or a kind word. "John knew how to print a newspaper and how to make friends not mere acquaintances, but true friends," Loftis said. "When he joined the Chronicle in a production role, he soon was giving advice to other departments throughout the building. The immediate result was resentment, but as we all learned to know and love John, his intrusions were overlooked. And besides, many of his ideas and suggestions had merit." Hershiser was born on Sept. 28, 1939, in Buffalo, N.Y., to Orel and Marjorie Hershiser. His father's name became widely known when it was given to Hershiser's brother and then passed down to his nephew, a former All-Star baseball pitcher with the Los Angeles Dodgers. His family moved to Wilmington, Del., when he was a teenager, and after graduating from DuPont High School there he joined the U.S. Marine Corps. He spent three years in the Marines, serving on the Presidential Honor Guard and Silent Drill Platoon. Hershiser left the Corps in 1961 and began his career as a printer with Greater Buffalo Press, which later became American Color Graphics. He rose through the ranks into management, last serving the company as its West Coast director of sales and marketing. "He was an excellent people person, and I think the workers respected and admired him," said his widow, Anne Hershiser. "He had great organizational skills . . . and a great sense of humor." Besides his mother and widow, Hershiser is survived by son John William II, of St. Augustine, Fla.; daughter Karla Sidey, of Sky Valley, Ga; brothers Orel Leonard Hershiser III and David Hershiser; sisters Bonnie Jean Stearns and Anne Fitts; and six grandchildren. Services are

scheduled for 11 a.m. Friday at St. Augustine National Cemetery. The family has asked that in lieu of flowers donations be made to a local chapter of the ALS Association.