



FIVE COUNTY NEWS FROM 'R' VIEW

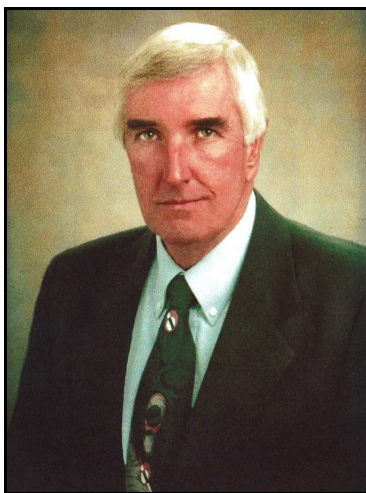
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Director's Dialogue

In lieu of a director's dialog and regular articles in this edition of our newsletter, we instead are paying special tribute to John S. Williams, former Executive Director of the Five County Association of Governments who passed away earlier this year. - Bryan Thriot

Special Edition - Honoring John S. Williams



On March 1, 2014 John Steven Williams passed away. John was a former Executive Director of the Five County Association of Governments.

John Steven Williams was born in Salt Lake City on July 16, 1946 to Howard and Silva Taylor Williams and was raised in Salt Lake, where he graduated from East High School in 1965. John graduated from Southern Utah State College (now Southern Utah University) with a degree in Business Administration and minors in Economics and Accounting. He was

awarded a Certificate of Merit as Outstanding Business Student, Class of 1973. In 1970, John married Rebecca Yager and had the privilege of having two girls, Lori and Emily. Then through a later marriage he gained a son, Gerald.

After graduation, John worked for a short time as a loan officer with Prudential Federal Savings and Loan in Salt Lake City. He then began his government service in 1973 when he went to work as a Budget and Accounting Officer for the Utah State Department of Social Services headquartered in Cedar City. John was instrumental in the unification of social service delivery systems including single point administration, one-step processing, and referral services. These are things in government services we sometimes take for granted now. John was always on the forefront of government modernization.

In September of 1978, John was appointed as Executive Director of the Five County Association of Governments. John was only the third person to serve in that capacity. John worked tirelessly throughout the 27½ years he was at the helm directing this multi-purpose organization. He ensured that staff properly fulfilled the overall purpose of the Association which is to provide a forum to identify, discuss, and study area-wide problems of common interest and resolve area-wide planning and

development concerns, as well as carrying out planning and developing programs with respect to the physical, economic, and human services within southwestern Utah.

John, along with the Five County Association of Government's elected officials serving on its governing Steering Committee throughout those years, directed the evolution of the Association from an emphasis in unification of social services programs, to the creation of the Southwest Utah Public Health Department and the Southwest Mental Health Center, and to planning for anticipated, and later realized, growth in Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Kane and Washington counties.

He married the love of his life, Jamie Spendlove, on October 14, 1989. Jamie was born in Hurricane and graduated from Kanab High School. Together they enjoyed many years of traveling to Europe, Guatemala, China, Greece and Hawaii. They welcomed 13 grandchildren into their lives, who they loved and cherished.

During the 1990's John helped the Association emphasize community and economic development projects, including corporate recruiting and corporate expansion. He played a key role in helping to bring the Wal-Mart distribution center to the region as well as the development of other industrial parks and businesses in this region. Working families in this region owe a debt of gratitude to John for this key work. Under John, the Association took a prominent role in addressing population growth issues, public lands issues, metropolitan transportation planning, rural transportation delivery, and human services programs. This was a result of southwest Utah coming into its own position as a major player in Utah issues. John was at the forefront of seeing that these issues were adequately addressed.

The key to the ever changing direction of the Association is, of course, driven by the needs, goals, and objectives of the local elected officials and the residents they represent in this region.

John led in the development of professional staff at the Association to provide technical expertise to local elected and appointed officials for the purpose of aiding in the development and implementation of an effective local and regional decision-making process.

The Association tackled many complex and challenging issues under John's leadership here as Executive Director. The agency began as the umbrella organization for social, mental health and public health service delivery in southwestern Utah. Over the years, the AOG has maintained a strong tradition of excellence in serving the needs of its constituent local governments and the region as a whole. A primary purpose of the organization has been to maximize the effectiveness of human service resources being expended in the Five County area of southwestern Utah through comprehensive planning, proper resource management, resource development and program evaluation. The AOG expanded to represent the region on planning assistance and community/economic development activities including corporate recruiting and business expansion and retention.

Limited funding through specific contracts required John to "cobble together" various funding sources to keep staff assigned

to essential programs and maintain delivery, particularly as administrative portions of federal and state budgets that funded local efforts diminished. John was particularly astute at tackling those ever-present challenges so that the Association's workforce could continue to deliver the critical services that kept rural Utah, our communities and residents moving forward.

Throughout the years John maintained a good working relationship with numerous state Senators and Representatives as well as our U.S. Senators and Congressional Representatives. He actively represented and protected the needs and interests of the residents of this region. John served on a number of boards and committees. John was successful in assisting local communities and counties in identifying their local community development needs and effective in helping those entities secure loans and grants from critical funding sources such as the Utah Permanent Community Impact Fund Board.

Of particular note, and something John was particularly proud of, was addressing the need for a permanent location for the core functions of the Association of Governments. Back in June of 2002, John and Kay H. Traveller, owner of K. H. Traveller Development signed a land purchase agreement which commenced development of the new Five County Tonaquint Center office building. This resulted in the Five County office relocating from its former leased location into a new facility owned by the Association. John was actively involved with Architect Leslie Stoker in designing the 10,000 square feet of office space and conference room. It was also designed to be energy efficient and water wise. It is a legacy to John S. Williams that this building does not have a lease payment or a mortgage. John always gratefully acknowledged that the new building would not have occurred had the elected officials in each of our five counties not unselfishly put aside, for one year, some local community development needs to facilitate the funding of the project.

While John could certainly be stubborn at times, he was not above listening to ideas others brought to him for consideration. One of these was a particular project that the Community Development staff here at the Association brought into his office late one morning. We proposed to him that the Association, on behalf of the individual counties, sponsor an application to fund the procurement of Meals on Wheels trucks to replace the inefficient method of meal delivery they were currently utilizing.

John was not initially keen on the idea, but directed us to further investigate the matter. In order to convince John on the project's viability, and the acceptance of it by the local elected officials, we suggested a demonstration of the capability of the new truck. We had the one truck that Washington County had procured driven to the Steering Committee meeting in Panguitch. The elected officials were so impressed with the capability of the truck that they wanted to immediately proceed with the project.

They let John know that his proposal was a great idea. Even U. S. Senator Orrin Hatch, who spoke at the ribbon cutting event for the 14 Meals on Wheels trucks that were ultimately purchased and prominently displayed to the public at the Dixie Center, stated that this one project was one of the most important and appropriate uses of the Block Grant funds he had ever seen, because it would make such a difference in the lives of the elderly we serve in this region of Utah.

The staff here at the Association during John's tenure remember and greatly appreciated the fun social activities like the annual Christmas party John held for employees and their spouses and significant others. John and Jamie regularly opened their home in Bloomington to these get-togethers until our staff grew too large for their home to accommodate all of us. John always took great pleasure in sending everyone home with a potted poinsettia after the conclusion of the sometimes ruckus parties (any rumor about fisticuffs occurring over LaDonna Ford's popcorn balls is greatly exaggerated). We also know that John enjoyed the outdoors, traveling, fishing and golf, and of course his grandchildren. John was proud of his new white truck which he showed off at our old office and then proceeded to take it deer hunting just after he got it. Well, he said it was a fishing trip, but he instead decided to hunt a deer down on the highway.

John retired from the Five County Association of Governments in 2006. Despite health difficulties which limited travel and enjoyment of his retirement years John always took great pleasure in his family and friends and maintained a happy attitude about life.

John was also proud of the new home he and Jamie had constructed in Santa Clara City. John was always filling us in on the progress of his new home and yard. The staff here at the Association was always happy to see John when he would stop in after his retirement. Despite his diminished health in the past several years, John would stop by from time to time and would always give us a warm greeting, with a pleasant smile and a firm handshake. John cared for us as staff while he was here at the Association, and we appreciated his leadership.

John's funeral was held on March 7, 2014 in Santa Clara and he was laid to rest in the Tonaquint Cemetery in St. George, very near our Association's office building.

John will be sorely missed. He will be remembered not only for all he has done for the Association and the elected officials but also for the professional development in us as staff that he nurtured while serving as our Executive Director. We are better at what we do for having known John, and this region of Utah is a much better place because of him. (Tribute compiled by Gary Zabriskie, Director of Community & Economic Development)

Beth Cottam, former Aging Programs Director and Deputy Director, retired:

John and I began working together in Cedar City around 1975. Back then the AOG and the Family Service Agency were co-located. John was the accounting officer for both organizations. When Iron County withdrew from the Five County AOG our offices were relocated to St. George. A real friendship developed during the months we carpoled from Cedar to St. George until we both moved here for work. I ended up working with or for John for 23 years. Our interagency softball games and Christmas party white elephant exchanges were notorious. John was also a great host for State and Federal visitors.

On one occasion, a group from a Salt Lake based agency came down to do program reviews and because they had state cars, John offered to drive them to Mesquite for dinner. But after work when the group's social drinking got a bit heavy, John asked me if I would be their designated driver. I told him I would if I could bring along a friend. I remember how nervous I was driving through the Virgin Rive Gorge in John's old station wagon filled my boss and tipsy people from the State. There was so much play in the wheel that I must have driven a bit too slow because they had time to sober up before we got there. They had my friend Dave drive on the way back.

John taught me a lot about a host of things and we were able to exchange advice about many areas of life. He was a very tough boss at times, but was always consistent in his expectations of excellence. As a result most all of the agency's programs were held up as examples of best practice work. It wasn't easy to get permission to launch new community development projects. John always insisted that all the ducks be lined up and the initiatives have clear benefits supported by local elected officials and partnering agencies. As a result, John and his support helped set up his employees for success and it always paid off. The local elected officials, state and federal agencies and most of all the citizens that lived in the Five County area benefitted from John's professionalism and support.

John was blessed to have Jamie enter his life. He was a much happier person after she came into the picture. We have loved them both.

Jo Seegmiller, Human Resources Director:

I first met John when I was 21 years old; I'm now 60 years old, so we have a long history. I was a shy young girl from Richfield wanting a job in St. George. He came to Richfield to interview me; hired me, and the rest is history.

Our first office location was the Dixiana Dorm in St. George. It was the original dormitory for Dixie College. Each office had previously been a bedroom. My office and John's were connected with a small kitchenette. At the time John was a smoker and in those days the health issues of second-hand smoke were not widely stressed. So.....the cigarette smoke wafted into my office on a daily basis. Over the years, after John quit smoking, he apologized many many times for placing me in an unhealthy environment. His apologies were always genuine and I knew he meant it.

After working with John at what was then called Five County Family Life Services, I took 10 years off from work to be a stay-at-home mom; but John and I didn't lose touch and after those 10 years were over, I returned again to work for him.

Over the years I grew to appreciate him as my supervisor. He was very loyal to me as his employee, and at one point even requested that state personnel employees come down to observe my work for a day. After their visit, they upgraded my position and gave me a raise. I always knew my work was appreciated and valued by John. As the Director of the AOG, he always went to bat for his employees. My co-workers will echo that statement.

Diane and I worked closely with him at the AOG, and he always enjoyed taking us both out to lunch on our December birthdays. It was a special tradition he continued even after his retirement. Diane and I always looked forward to those lunches at Paula's with John and Jamie.

As well as being my employer, John was a great friend to me and my husband. He always inquired about my family and was eager to talk about his family. I remember when Lori was just a toddler, she'd come to visit John at the office and she'd sit on my lap and play with the calculator. I'm sure SHE doesn't remember, but I have fond memories of those occasions.

John has been my friend longer than anyone in St. George, including my husband, almost 39 years. I think it says something about a friendship that enduring. He will be missed by many, but especially by me.

Lis Barker, Director Child Care Resource & Referral, Western Region:

I came to the AOG from public education and I was definitely not used to the politics of state government. John Williams, to say the least, was intimidating. I cried all the way home from St. George to Cedar after my job interview knowing that I wouldn't get the job and that even if I did, I could never work for John Williams. When I got home the phone was ringing and it was John offering me the job. Later I learned that he had reservations about hiring someone he didn't know if he could "control". So despite a rocky start, and a fiery first year of two "type A" personalities learning to respect each other and work together, John Williams became my mentor and friend.

Here are some of the things I learned not just from him but also from watching the way he conducted himself with others, both the powerful and the needy.

- Work hard, the people we are working for deserve our best. Never be condescending to anyone.
- Be honest. Record your hours exactly as you work them. Keep excellent records. Don't fudge anything. This is the AOG way. We conduct ourselves with integrity and then we never have to worry whatever comes, audits, state oversight committees, public criticism. We know we have done our best and we can back it up with documentation.
- Don't back down in a fight when you know you are right. Some things are worth fighting for and being passionate about.
- When you are wrong apologize. John wasn't often wrong but he was known to apologize on occasion.
- Make friends. Much of what John accomplished was through his vast network of friends. Once when a state person was on the war path, I went to John and told him I needed him to call her and go to bat for me. John said he would take care of it. A few days later I asked John if he had called her...he said no, but he didn't think I needed to worry. I was frantic telling him

that yes, I needed to worry. Then he said, I didn't call her. She's being ridiculous, I called their Deputy Director. Such was John's reputation and influence.

- Be a good sport. John didn't flinch when I cast him as Scrooge in a spoof for the office Christmas Party and I think there may be a video somewhere of John wearing a hula skirt. He wasn't above letting people have a little fun and laughing at himself too.
- Remember working for the AOG is a privilege and it is a great job, but it is a job, and you should also have a life.

Kenneth Sizemore, former Director of Community and Economic Development, Executive Director, retired:

I met John for the first time when I interviewed for a job with Five County AOG in 1978. I didn't get the job then, but I remember the penetrating questions John posed. When I applied again in 1986, those who knew John warned me that I would be working for someone who demanded the best and would let me know when I didn't measure up! I was lucky enough to earn the position and went to work for John.

John was a demanding, but fair, boss. As others have mentioned, he fought hard to craft equitable employee benefit packages and looked out for those who demonstrated hard work and perseverance. We worked hard to establish the regional Revolving Loan Fund which has helped dozens of companies expand and create hundreds of new jobs in the region. We forged new ties with federal land managers and helped create more effective involvement of local officials in land management processes. We also set the stage for aggressive involvement in regional transportation planning and programming.

John always stood by me by supporting opportunities that in many cases placed more work on his shoulders. He supported my assignment as a member of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument Planning Team, an effort that took me away from my AOG duties for almost three years. Throughout my time at the AOG, he also supported my National Guard activities. When a year-long deployment to Iraq loomed, he once again took on additional work to make sure I could fulfill my obligations. I was proud to nominate him for a "Boss Lift" trip to Alaska.

John always enjoyed social gatherings, especially Christmas parties. It was a bittersweet time when the staff outgrew our ability to host "get togethers" with spouses and children. He especially looked forward to moderating the annual gift exchange, which could evolve into quite a donnybrook!

John was held in high esteem across the state. Officials in the Governor's Office, Legislature and numerous agencies knew that John would never champion an idea or project unless every "I" was dotted and every "T" crossed.

I will always treasure my opportunity to work with John. I'm comforted knowing that he is now resting in peace.

Robert (Bob) Rasmussen, former Chief Financial Officer, retired:

Foremost among the things I remember about John, was that he was very loyal to those who worked for him and he would go to bat for you in any situation just as long as he knew you were giving him and the AOG your best efforts. He really loved what he was doing at the AOG and he expected those who worked for him to work hard and love what they were doing. Loyalty was a big thing for John.

When I first went to work for the AOG, I was 27 years old. To tell you the truth, I was quite scared of John because my office was across the hall from his and I could hear him on the phone giving people the "going over", I even heard him on occasion, throw the phone in the garbage can and say a few choice words. I soon learned however, that John's bark was much worse than his bite, he really cared for me and my family and I knew that if I ever needed his help or advice, we would always be there for me.

I felt honored to be asked to be John's religious advisor at times. Whenever we had a AOG party or meal, I would be the one asked to say the blessing on the food or the prayer. I even had the opportunity to help John review what he would say when asked to say a prayer or speak in a church meeting or funeral. I felt it was such a great honor because John was very intelligent and he didn't need people to give him advice on very many things. John was a very dear friend and I will miss him greatly.

U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch: *(read on the floor of the United States Senate)*

"Mr. President. I am grateful for the opportunity to pay tribute to a truly extraordinary public servant, father, grandfather, and neighbor – Mr. John S. Williams. Sadly, John passed away this week leaving behind a legacy of dedication and service.

John worked for an unprecedented 27 ½ years as the Executive Director of the Five County Association of Governments (AOG); only the third person to serve in that position since the Association's inception. This Association was formed to address the needs and challenges facing the southwest region of Utah – Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Kane, and Washington counties. As the director, John set a tone of hard work, commitment, and a belief in the greatness of southwest Utah. He was comfortable not only in the director's chair – but rolling up his sleeves and getting the hard work done.

He was a key figure in promoting economic development in southwest Utah, as well as the whole state. He helped formulate policy and address issues facing an increasingly expanding region including: infrastructure, public lands issues, population growth, and quality of life. The Five County AOG has a reputation throughout Utah as an association that makes a difference and helps forge the way, largely in part because of the strength of John's leadership for almost three decades.

While working with John on many occasions throughout my Senate service I have always found him as someone who deeply

cared about those he served, and had ideas and solutions to address the challenges facing a very important region of Utah. The example he set will be felt for generations to come; and the five counties he served are better prepared for the future challenges and triumphs they will face in the coming years.

Elaine and I convey our deepest sympathies to John's wife Jamie, his five children, and many grandchildren. May our Heavenly Father bless them with peace and comfort at this time. The contributions and impact John made on his family, his community, and our state will be felt and appreciated for generations to come. Utah is a better state because of the service John rendered throughout his life and his strong advocacy of southwest Utah."

Congressman Chris Stewart: *(Read on the House floor)*

"Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor an exemplary leader in American governance - John S. Williams, the former Executive Director of the Five County Association of Governments in Utah. Mr. Williams, who passed away last week, demonstrated over 30 years of dedicated government service on the county level.

Through his tenure, he showed that local counties can often accomplish more and govern better than the Federal Government. He helped emphasize economic development projects, corporate recruiting and expansion, and community growth programs on a multi-county level. His leadership led to the significant development of industrial parks and businesses, as well as important progress in the areas of population growth, public land issues, transportation planning, and human services programs.

At a time when Congress seems to be at a stalemate due to partisanship, we must look to local leaders like John S. Williams as an example of what we can accomplish with hard work and dedication. Mr. Williams will be greatly missed in the community, and I send my thoughts and prayers to his family. And with that Mr. Speaker, I yield back."

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