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Obituary: Sheldon 'Happy' Weisman

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By JOE SIMNACHER / The Dallas Morning News

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Sheldon "Happy" Weisman found a harmony in drumming that he shared with people across North Texas and beyond.

He used the Internet to bring drummers together and founded Drums Not Guns, a nonprofit organization that offers a nonviolent outlet for at-risk young people.

Mr. Weisman, 67, died Wednesday of complications of lung cancer at his Dallas home.

Graveside services were Friday at Restland Memorial Park.

"He's the one who's held the space for this to happen in Dallas and we want to carry it on," said Suzanna Brown, vice president and director of Drums Not Guns.

But Mr. Weisman's drumming efforts were just the most audible work of a generous man, said Amy Martin of Dallas.

"He was such a big-hearted champion of causes, particularly if he thought you were the underdog," Ms. Martin said. "If your heart was breaking, his heart was breaking, too."

Mr. Weisman organized hundreds of benefits for people in need, such as a cancer patient who needed a wig or person who had lost a family member.

Other projects were much larger.

Mr. Weisman was a charter member of Congregation Beth Torah, where, as president of the Men's Club, he implemented Christmas Mitzvah. The program allows members of the Jewish congregation to fill in on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day for Christians who work at nursing homes, hospitals, clinics and shelters.

And, while he was known as Happy for his ever-present smile, Mr. Weisman was tenacious about the causes he supported, Ms. Martin said.

"If you didn't butt heads with Happy, you just weren't his friend," she said. "He was very passionate about everything."

Mr. Weisman was born in St. Louis and moved to Dallas with his family in 1950, when he was 8 years old.

After graduating from [Thomas Jefferson](#) High School, Mr. Weisman served in the Navy, where he was exposed to fallout from nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

After serving in the military, Mr. Weisman attended North Texas State University, now the University of North Texas.

In 1964, he married Elaine Soven. The couple divorced in the mid-1980s.

Mr. Weisman also had several successful careers. In the early 1970s, he owned and operated a Jack in the Box franchise.

For the next 20 years, he had an optical shop at several locations in the Preston Road and Forest Lane area.

The third leg of Mr. Weisman's career was as a prolific insurance salesman. He was asked to speak at a national convention about his sales techniques.

Mr. Weisman discovered drumming at a 1992 men's retreat.

"He was very passionate about it," said his son, Jason Weisman of Dallas. "It helped him to achieve spiritual growth."

His networking of people into drumming circle and workshops helped many, Ms. Brown said.

"It's a way to bring people together that don't speak the same language or believe the same, but you come together and play together and it doesn't really matter," she said. "It makes communities... let's see how we can get in rhythm together."

In addition to his son, Mr. Weisman is survived by a daughter, Amanda Gober of San Antonio, and two grandchildren.