

Biography Of Allan Shivers

Robert Allan Shivers (1907-1985), governor of Texas, was born on October 5, 1907, in Lufkin, Texas, the son of Robert Andrew and Easter (Creasy) Shivers, and spent his early childhood at Magnolia Hills, the family home near Woodville. By the age of thirteen he was "doing a man's job" after school and during the summer at a nearby sawmill. When his father moved to Port Arthur, Shivers completed his secondary schooling, graduating from Port Arthur High School in 1924. He then entered the University of Texas, intent upon becoming a lawyer like his father. At the end of his first year he dropped out of school to work at an oil refinery in Port Arthur. But by 1928 he had reentered the University of Texas, determined to participate fully in campus life and to graduate. He ran for and was elected president of the Students' Association and was a member of the Friars, the Cowboys, and Delta Theta Phi law fraternity.

In 1931 Shivers graduated with a B.A. degree and also passed the state bar exam, although he did not receive his LL.B. degree until two years later. He engaged in private law practice in Port Arthur until 1934, when he was elected as a Democrat to the state senate, at age twenty-seven the youngest member ever to sit in that body. In 1937 he married Marialice Shary of Mission, whose father, John H. Shary, was a prominent citrus fruit grower, cattleman, banker, and realtor in the Rio Grande valley. In 1943 Shivers entered the United States Army and during the next 2 1/2 years served with the Allied Military Government in North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany.

Upon his discharge from the army in 1945 with the rank of major (with five battle stars and the Bronze Star), Shivers became general manager of his father-in-law's business enterprises. But he soon decided to pursue an ambitious political career. In 1946 he ran for and was elected state lieutenant governor; he was reelected two years later. Together with Democratic Governor Beauford H. Jester, Shivers helped bring Texas into the twentieth century. As lieutenant governor he initiated the practice of appointing senators to specific committees and setting the daily agenda. Subsequently, the Senate passed a right-to-work law, reorganized the public school system with the Gilmer-Aikin Laws, appropriated funds for higher education, including the Texas State University for Negroes (now Texas Southern University), and provided monies for improvements of state hospitals and highways.

On July 11, 1949, Beauford Jester died; subsequently Shivers assumed the governorship, which he held effectively for the next 7 1/2 years. During his tenure he pushed through significant legislation as well as reforms of state government. He helped create the Legislation Council, which researches and drafts bills, and the Legislative Budget Board, which sets the budget for legislative consideration. Shivers also expanded state services by pushing tax increases through the legislature. His administrations thus augmented appropriations for eleemosynary institutions, retirement benefits for state employees, aid for the elderly, teacher salaries, and improvements for roads and bridges.

During his terms of office the legislature also enacted laws pertaining to safety inspection and driver responsibility, legislative redistricting in 1951 (the first in thirty years), and the expansion of juries and grand juries to include women in January 1955. But Shivers was probably best known for defending state claims to the Tidelands against the Truman administration and his break with the national Democratic party over this issue. As a result, he was instrumental in delivering the state's electoral votes in 1952 to Republican nominee Dwight D. Eisenhower and the subsequent congressional approval in 1953 of the state's claim to the Tidelands.

During the last years of his governorship, his popularity diminished. Because of his support of Eisenhower in 1952 he was accused of disloyalty to the Democratic party. He also lost support for his opposition to *Brown v. Board of Education*, which legally ended segregation. And even though Shivers was never implicated in any way, his administration became tainted with corruption because of state scandals involving insurance and veterans' lands.

After retiring from politics in January 1957, Shivers served in a number of capacities. He actively managed vast business enterprises in the valley, which his wife inherited. He served on the board of directors or as chairman for a number of banks, including the Austin National Bank (later Interfirst Bank Austin) and Texas Commerce Bank. He was president of the United States Chamber of Commerce and, for a time, chairman of the advisory board of the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

In 1973 Shivers was appointed to a six-year term to the University of Texas Board of Regents, whereupon he served as chairman for four years. During this time he donated his Austin home, the historic Pease mansion, to the university to help raise funds for the UT law school. In 1980 he was instrumental in securing a \$5 million grant for the UT College of Communications, which soon thereafter established an endowed chair of journalism in his honor. On January 14, 1985, Shivers died suddenly from a massive heart attack. He was survived by wife Marialice, three sons and a daughter, and ten grandchildren.

-http://www.laits.utexas.edu/txp_media/html/exec/governors/23.html
(8/12/13)