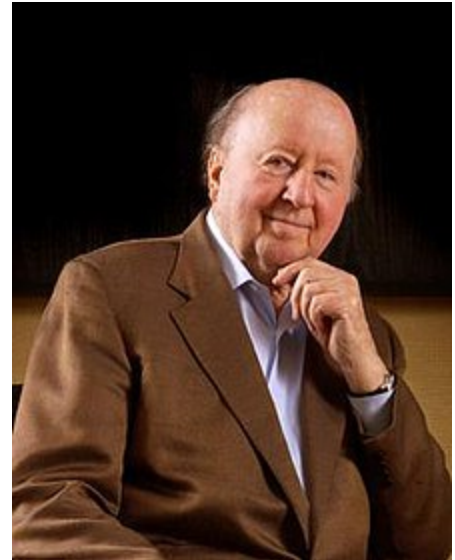


# George P. Mitchell

W [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_P.\\_Mitchell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_P._Mitchell)

## George P. Mitchell

Mitchell in 2011



<b>Born</b>	May 21, 1919 <u>Galveston, Texas, U.S.</u>
<b>Died</b>	July 26, 2013 (aged 94) Tremont House, Galveston, Texas, U.S.
<b>Nationality</b>	American
<b>Alma mater</b>	<u>Texas A&amp;M University</u>
<b>Occupation(s)</b>	Founder of Mitchell Energy & Development Corp.; philanthropist
<b>Years active</b>	1950s–1990s
<b>Known for</b>	<u>Hydraulic fracturing</u> pioneer, developer of <u>The Woodlands</u> , <u>Galveston</u> restoration, philanthropic support of sustainability
<b>Spouse</b>	Cynthia Woods Mitchell
<b>Children</b>	10
<b>Website</b>	<u>Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation</u>

**George Phydias Mitchell** (May 21, 1919 – July 26, 2013) was an American businessman, real estate developer and philanthropist from Texas credited with pioneering the economic extraction of shale gas.<sup>[1]</sup>

According to *The Economist*, "few businesspeople have done as much to change the world as George Mitchell."<sup>[2]</sup>

The rise [in shale gas] has been helped along by a variety of factors ... But the biggest difference was down to the efforts of one man: George Mitchell, ... who saw the potential for improving a known technology, fracking, to get at the gas. Big oil and gas companies were interested in shale gas but could not make the breakthrough in fracking to get the gas to flow. Mr Mitchell spent ten years and \$6m to crack the problem (surely the best-spent development money in the history of gas). Everyone, he said, told him he was just wasting his time and money.

— *The Economist*, July 2012<sup>[3]</sup>.

## Early life

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Mitchell was born to Greek immigrant parents in the port city of Galveston, Texas in 1919.<sup>[4]</sup> His father, Savvas Paraskevopoulos, was from the village of Nestani in Arcadia, tended goats before immigrating to the United States in 1901, arriving at Ellis Island at the age of 20. He worked for railroads, and gradually moved west. When a paymaster got tired of writing his long name and threatened to fire him, Mr. Paraskevopoulos took the paymaster's name, Mike Mitchell. Mike Mitchell settled in Galveston, where he ran a succession of shoe-shining and pressing shops. When he saw the picture of a beautiful woman in a local Greek newspaper, he headed for Florida, where she had settled, according to family lore. He persuaded her to abandon her fiancé and marry him. They lived above the shoeshine shop.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Oil and gas business

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In 1940, George Mitchell earned a degree in petroleum engineering with an emphasis in geology from Texas A&M University. He graduated as the valedictorian in his class and was also the captain of the men's tennis team.<sup>[6]</sup>

He started an independent oil and gas company, Mitchell Energy & Development Corp. and built it into a Fortune 500 company. He participated in the development of about 10,000 wells, including more than 1000 wildcat wells.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

In the 1980s and 1990s, the company experimented with application of different techniques of hydraulic fracturing of the Barnett Shale of Texas, eventually finding the right technique to economically extract the natural gas in the formation. The new approach has been widely adopted by the gas industry and spawned a new gas boom in North America. The Potential Gas Committee estimates that U.S. recoverable reserves will last 118 years at current

production levels.<sup>[9]</sup> but production is expected to more than triple by 2020.<sup>[10]</sup> Extracting natural gas from shale rock is rapidly spreading to countries outside the United States. Some consider his innovation important in the context of energy security, making the United States less dependent on foreign sources of energy. Because of the technological progress in industry fracking, George Mitchell is now known as the "pioneer of shale." For this reason, it is proposed that the date of his birth -21 May 1919 – will be considered as the "Shale Day".<sup>[11]</sup> Mitchell Energy & Development Corp. was later acquired by Devon Energy.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Real estate development

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Mitchell was the developer of The Woodlands, an unincorporated yet governmentally structured township in Montgomery County, Texas, which he developed from timberland located 32 miles north of downtown Houston. He brought on landscape architect Ian McHarg to consult on the project. The master plan for the community called for preserving trees, protecting the environment, minimizing flooding and creating a "pleasant" urban environment. In 2010, The Woodlands was home to 97,000 people. When fully developed the population will have reached 130,000.<sup>[13][14]</sup> He and his wife Cynthia played a major role in the revitalization of his hometown of Galveston. Mitchell had a lifelong passion for tennis, and the tennis center at Texas A&M University, where he was captain of the tennis team, was named in his honor. Built for an estimated \$4.2 million, the official ribbon cutting ceremony was held on October 23, 1998. In 1984, he was the recipient of an honorary doctoral degree from the University of Houston.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Philanthropy

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Mitchell and his wife Cynthia, along with the Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation, have distributed or pledged more than \$400 million in grants to causes, programs, and institutions.<sup>[16][17]</sup>

The vast majority of this amount is related to science, environmental sustainability, and sustainability science-related fields, including the foundation's current grant-making programs which focus on sustainability science, clean energy, water, and natural gas sustainability.



The Mitchell Physics Building on Texas A&M University's campus.

On December 7, 2010, he joined the Giving Pledge sponsored by Warren Buffett and Bill and Melinda Gates, making public his and Cynthia's long-held private intent that the majority of their wealth would be donated to charitable causes.<sup>[18]</sup>

According to the National Academies of Science, "In the 1970s [Mitchell] helped sponsor the work of Dennis Meadows, whose Club of Rome study The Limits to Growth was a global wake-up call on the pressing need for sustainable energy technologies and food sources

worldwide."<sup>[19]</sup>

Working with Meadows and other national leaders Mitchell created The Woodlands Conference series and the International George and Cynthia Mitchell Prize, both dedicated to sustainable development. He was particularly interested in the role of the business community in creating sustainable societies and he himself is "a model of linking entrepreneurial success to the sustainability movement".<sup>[20]</sup> The Mitchells also underwrote the National Academies' Our Common Journey: A Transition Toward Sustainability,<sup>[21]</sup> the 1999 report that defined the role of science and technology in moving toward sustainability. As a follow-up to Our Common Journey, Mitchell donated \$20 million to create the George and Cynthia Mitchell Endowment for Sustainability Science at the National Academy of Sciences committed to advancing science and technology in support of sustainable development.<sup>[22][19]</sup> Mitchell also founded the Houston Advanced Research Center that explores strategies for sustainable development at the regional level. He donated \$25 million to the Endowment for Regional Sustainability Science to support HARC's work in sustainability science. Mitchell donated part of his wealth to the Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation, which supports programs for the efficient and wise use of Earth's resources.<sup>[23]</sup>

Enabled by Mitchell's donation of \$35 million, the Texas A&M University Physics department relocated to two new buildings in late 2009: The George P. and Cynthia W. Mitchell Fundamental Physics and Astronomy Building and the George P. Mitchell Physics Building. In 2012, he committed an additional \$20 million to the Mitchell Institute for Fundamental Physics and Astronomy. This donation is the latest in a series supporting science and the physics department in particular. With previous gifts supporting academic chairs, professorships and the Giant Magellan Telescope project, the Mitchells are Texas A&M's most generous modern benefactors, with donations totaling nearly \$100 million; by 2011, his total contributions to universities and research organizations had reached \$159 million.<sup>[8]</sup>

Mitchell and his wife were also major supporters of Texas A&M's marine studies orientated branch campus Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG), donating the land for the main campus and the main campus is named in honor of Mitchell's father.<sup>[6]</sup> Mitchell made numerous other gifts to the university over the years, including the donation of a yacht named S.V. Cynthia Woods named after his wife Cynthia.<sup>[24]</sup>

## Personal life

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In 2004, *Forbes* magazine estimated his net worth as \$1.6 billion, placing him among the 500 richest people worldwide.<sup>[25][26]</sup> Mitchell died at the age of 94 on July 26, 2013, at his home in Galveston of natural causes, while surrounded by relatives.<sup>[27][28]</sup> He was predeceased by his wife, Cynthia, who died on December 27, 2009,<sup>[29]</sup> and his two brothers, Christie and Johnny. He was survived by his sister, Maria Mitchell Ballantyne; his ten

children, daughters Pamela Maguire, Meredith Dreiss and Sheridan Lorenz, and sons Scott, Mark, Kent, Greg, Kirk, Todd and Grant; 23 grandchildren, 5 great grandchildren and 19 nieces and nephews.<sup>[30][2]</sup>

## Awards and honors

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- Golden Plate Award of the American Academy of Achievement (1978)<sup>[31]</sup>
- Medal for distinguished achievement from Texas A&M Geosciences and Earth Resources Advisory Council (1980)
- Horatio Alger Award, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers' first Award for Distinguished Service in the Petroleum Industry
- Honorary doctoral degree from the University of Houston (1984)
- The Galveston Daily News' Citizen of the Year and the Ima Hogg Historical Achievement Award (1988)
- Global Tomorrow Coalition's Lorax Award for contributions to the environment (1989)
- Merrill Lynch, Ernst & Young and Inc. Magazine's Master Entrepreneur of the Year (1992)
- Boy Scouts of America's Hornaday Award for Environmental Achievement (1993)
- Galveston's Leonora Kempner Thompson Community Enrichment Award (1993)
- American Institute of Architects' Jefferson Award
- Texas Business Hall of Fame Award, the National Preservation Honor Award
- Texas A&M's Aggie of the Year (1994)
- Governor's Award for Historic Preservation presented to Mr. And Mrs. Mitchell by Governor George W. Bush (1995)
- Houston Chapter of the Texas Society of Certified Public Accountants' honoree, and the Mirabeau B. Lamar Award (1996)
- Nature Conservancy of Texas' Lifetime Achievement honoree (1997)
- Texas Society of Architects' first Cornerstone Award presented to Mr. And Mrs. Mitchell
- Galveston Historical Foundation's Spirit of Elissa Award
- Galveston Chamber of Commerce's Christie Mitchell Award (1999)
- Prevent Blindness Texas' People of Vision Award presented to Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell
- World Future Society's Distinguished Service Award (2000)
- National Trust of Historic Preservation's Crowninshield Award presented to Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell
- Texas Society of Professional Engineers' Engineering Dream Team member
- Pioneer Oil Producers Society's Distinguished Service Award (2001)
- Institute for Energy Law's John Rogers Award (2002)

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## The Woodlands, Texas

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# 'Father of Fracking' Dies at 94

George P. Mitchell Helped Unleash U.S. Energy Boom

*By Tom Fowler*

July 26, 2013 6:45 pm ET

George P. Mitchell turned hydraulic fracturing from an experimental technique into an energy-industry mainstay, making it possible to pump oil and gas from once untappable rocks and unleashing an energy boom across the U.S.





Known as the father of fracking, Mr. Mitchell died Friday at age 94 at his home in Galveston, Texas.

The co-founder of Mitchell Energy & Development Corp. spent years pushing his company's engineers to find ways to get more natural gas out of the ground, especially from rocks that seemed too tough to drill. They finally figured out successful ways to break up shale rocks with pressurized water, chemicals and sand in the process known as hydraulic fracturing.

"George Mitchell, more than anyone else, is responsible for the most important energy innovation of the 21st century," said Daniel Yergin, vice chairman of consulting firm IHS and a Pulitzer Prize winning author on energy.

The son of poor Greek immigrants, Mr. Mitchell graduated with a degree in petroleum engineering from what is now Texas A&M University in 1940. After serving in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during World War II, Mr. Mitchell and his brother Johnny started an oil exploration business in Houston in 1946.

His first efforts at fracking, in the late 1970s, were expensive, and at times investors and his board of directors questioned the spending. But by the late 1990s the company had figured out the right mix of techniques and materials to produce shale gas economically, and began to do so on a major scale.

Devon Energy Corp. bought Mr. Mitchell's firm in 2002 for \$3.1 billion, combined the hydraulic fracturing techniques with horizontal drilling, and helped launch the current surge in oil and gas production.

In the 1970s Mr. Mitchell put his energy wealth to work developing thousands of acres of pine forest north of Houston into a master-planned residential community, The Woodlands.

"George didn't want The Woodlands to become just another bedroom community but to also become a major employment center," said Bill White, a former Houston mayor and assistant secretary of energy. "That's why today there are just as many people commuting into The Woodlands as there are out of it."

Mr. Mitchell was also instrumental in preserving large parts of his hometown of Galveston, a coastal city that has struggled economically. Last year he joined with New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's philanthropic foundation to study ways to develop oil and natural gas reserves around the country in an environmentally responsible way.

—*Email remembrances@wsj.com*

Write to Tom Fowler at [tom.fowler@wsj.com](mailto:tom.fowler@wsj.com)

# The Big Story: George P. Mitchell, billionaire Texas oilman, developer, and philanthropist, dead at 94

[cgmf.org/blog-entry/50/The-Big-Story-George-P.-Mitchell-billionaire-Texas-oilman-developer-and-philanthropist-dead-at-94.html](https://cgmf.org/blog-entry/50/The-Big-Story-George-P.-Mitchell-billionaire-Texas-oilman-developer-and-philanthropist-dead-at-94.html)

Michael Graczyk | **The Associated Press** | July 26, 2013



Billionaire Texas oilman, developer and philanthropist George P. Mitchell, considered the father of fracking, died Friday at his home in Galveston, his family said.

He was 94.

Mitchell, the son of a Greek immigrant who ran a dry cleaning business in Galveston, became one of the wealthiest men in the U.S. He is considered the chief pioneer of hydraulic fracturing, the now common industry process known as fracking that uses chemicals with water under high pressure to crack open rock formations and release oil and natural gas.

The process has led to an energy industry boom.

Mitchell's family, on the family foundation website, said he died of natural causes while surrounded by relatives.

Over his career, he participated in drilling some 10,000 wells, including more than 1,000 wildcats — wells drilled away from known fields. His company, Mitchell Energy & Development, was credited with more than 200 oil and 350 natural gas discoveries.

The firm spent nearly two decades developing hydraulic fracturing, finally finding success in North Texas' Barnett Shale formation in the 1990s.

"There's no point in mincing words. Some people thought it was stupid," Dan Steward, a geologist who began working with the Texas natural gas firm Mitchell Energy in 1981 told The Associated Press in an interview last year. Steward estimated in the early years, "probably 90% of the people" in the firm didn't believe shale gas would be profitable, and that Mitchell's company didn't even cover the cost of fracking on shale tests until the 36th well was drilled.

But he credited the company namesake as a tenacious visionary.

"There's not a lot of companies that would stay with something this long," he said. "Most companies would have given up."

"Because of Mitchell's persistence ... we are today witnessing an unprecedented boom in domestic energy production and the associated economic benefits in Texas and nationwide," Texas Railroad Commission Chairman Barry Smitherman agreed Friday.

Mitchell sold his energy company in 2002 for \$3.1 billion.

According to his biography posted by the Mitchell Foundation, the North Texas gas field that became the foundation of his oil empire was the result of a deal promoted by a Chicago bookmaker.

"His story was quintessentially American," the family statement said. "George P. Mitchell was raised as a child of meager means who, throughout his life, believed in giving back to the community that made his success possible and lending a hand to the less fortunate struggling to reach their potential.

"He will be fondly remembered for flying in the face of convention — focusing on what could be, with boundless determination — many times fighting through waves of skepticism and opposition to achieve his vision."

George Phydias Mitchell and his wife, Cynthia, who died in 2009, had 10 children. Their work together was "dedicated to making the world a more hospitable and sustainable place," their family said.

Mitchell graduated first in his class of 1940 at Texas A&M University with degrees in petrochemical engineering and geology. He helped pay for his school costs by running a tailoring and laundry business in College Station and selling candy and stationery to his fellow student Aggies, then in later years became the school's largest benefactor with donations topping \$95 million.

This year, the annual Forbes list of wealthiest Americans ranked him 239th with a net worth of \$2 billion.

Mitchell spent four years in the Army Corps of Engineers during World War II. Afterward, he struck out on his own with a brother and a partner as a wildcatter operation.

Over the years, he spent tens of millions rebuilding his hometown of Galveston, resurrecting a long-dormant annual Mardi Gras celebration and singlehandedly providing money helping to restore the city's historic downtown Strand District.

He donated the land for Texas A&M University at Galveston.

"To say he was a great man with foresight and generosity isn't enough," Adm. Robert Smith III, the school's president, said. "His contributions to this university literally made this institution possible."

His Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation, founded in 1979, has made more than \$400 million in gifts.

Former U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison and Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst both called Mitchell a true Texas legend.

"George Mitchell was a pioneer in the energy industry and was admired by many around the world for his entrepreneurial spirit," Dewhurst said Friday.

In the early 1970s, Mitchell began developing The Woodlands, a suburban Houston master-planned community designed as a place for mixed-income residential development with jobs and amenities nearby while preserving the East Texas forest and other natural resources that covered the 27,000 acres. He later would call it his most satisfying achievement.

The Woodlands is now home to about 100,000 people and one of the nation's busiest outdoor performing arts and entertainment venues there carries his wife's name, the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion.

"His ambition and success have transformed our region," Houston Mayor Annise Parker said. "He was a visionary, and showed his love for Houston through his work and hometown pride."

"He had the right mix of vision, optimism and tenacity, and a love for his fellow man," the Mitchell family statement said. "There's no doubt that he helped make this world a better place."

Funeral arrangements were not immediately released.

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