



Steven Richard McNelis

May 6, 1946 - April 24, 2021

Steven Richard McNelis was born on May 6, 1946 and passed away on April 24, 2021 at age 74.

Steve grew up in Van Nuys and graduated from U.S. Grant High School in 1964. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from Chico State, he returned to Southern California and obtained a Master of Arts degree from California State University at Los Angeles. He began teaching high school while attending the Southwestern Law School at night.

After receiving his law degree, Steve returned to Butte County and started teaching law, legal research, evidence and criminal procedures in the Administration of Justice program at Butte Community College in 1975, and continued until he retired in 2007. He has been described as an instructor who used humor to keep his classes interesting and he often had former students tell him that he was the instructor they remembered as the one who helped shape their career.

Steve had dual careers as he was also elected as the Gridley Justice Court Judge in 1976 and served in that role for 11 years until he retired in 1987. Even after retiring he continued to work as an assigned judge with Butte County Superior Court and other County Superior courts until December 2020. The court staff appreciated his empathy for litigants and in particular, his ability to help parties settle their cases in a way that allowed them to appreciate the justice system. Steve served the Butte County community with enthusiasm, clarity, and a vibrant commitment to justice.

Steve was active in a number of organizations. He served on both the Institute Committee and Journal Committee of the California Center for Judicial Education and Research and the Butte County Court Improvement Committee.

In 1980 Steve was elected as the representative of all California justice court judges as a member of the Executive Board of the California Judges Association. As the liaison with the Justice Courts Improvement Committee, Steve was active in pursuing legislation to benefit the administration of justice. Steve was elected Vice President of the California Judges Association for a one-year term in 1982. Additionally, he was active in the California Judges, Marshalls, and Constables Association.

Steve was also a member of the community-based Comanches horseback riding group in the 1990's and participated in numerous riding adventures.

Steve loved riding his Harley Davidson with his wife, Kris, and his schnauzer biker dogs. He was a passionate skier and he and Kris enjoyed traveling in their RV throughout the United States.

Steve is survived by his wife, Kris, his sons Pat and Kevin, his daughter, Kaillee, his grandson, Lassen, his brother and sister-in-law Don and Virginia, as well as his nephew, Chris and his niece, Kelly and their children.

The family has requested that memorial contributions be made to St. Judes Cancer research in care of Brusie Funeral Home.

Comments



“ Steve McNelis was an incredible man with a wicked sense of humor. The gleam in his eye and his big heart will be remembered by all who knew him. I was saddened to hear of his passing.

He was a man whose enthusiasm was barely contained by his body. Energy surrounded him like an aura. And it was contagious. He had an exuberance that I'm surprised he was able to keep in check when he wore his robes at the bench.

My heart goes out to all of Steve's family and friends: In us Steve's memory will live on and that web of relationships that binds us will not be broken for it is woven with love.

Dear Pat, if you read this: You were the most awesome 12-year-old. I still tell stories about you. But I also tell stories about your dad. And here is one of my favorites:

When I met Mr. McNelis it was 1990. I had bleached-white spiky hair and wore a leather jacket, ripped up Levis and combat boots. He was one of my teachers (along with Druley) and he always joked with Druley about cutting my tiny ponytail off. It was like a shoe-string hanging there at the back of my head. And they teased me about it.

One day my friend Kelley gave him a piece of wig, telling him she had cut off my 'tail'. He didn't fall for our prank, but showed it to Druley and said he finally cut-off my 'tail'. Druley rushed into our classroom to check my neck. We all busted up. (Man, I loved those guys)

Then a few months later when I was busy at the big copy machine at the DAs office. McNelis shouted across the office "I'm gonna get your tail!!" The whole office fell silent -- even the copier -- and he quickly added "Her ponytail. I'm talking about her ponytail." Everyone just stared back and forth between us. It was so funny. I don't think I've ever seen him blush like that. He was like my favorite uncle: Always made me smile. I was so glad when he and Kris got together. I so wanted them to find their perfect partner. I just wish I was actually around to witness it, but by then I was at university and missed it all.

McNelis was truly a wonderful man and inspirational teacher.

Steve's presence made lives that little bit brighter. He saw people's potential and gave them a chance. He was open, honest, and didn't pull any punches -- but he was kind.

Steve McNelis touched many hearts and his memory will live on in those who knew him. He touched many lives and made those lives better.



“ I was lucky to know and work with Steve at Butte College. I remember his election night for Justice Court Judge in Gridly. I had the honor of working with Steve as a peer instructor, Dept. Chair and his Dean
I had the pleasure of working with him from 1975 until 1998. I always loved talking to his students. They loved Steve. They thought he was a great teacher
That he was. He brought his classes in administration of justice alive . Butte College to have such a great teacher. I was so lucky to have him as a friend for 23 years. If there is a service I would love to attend.

Fred Allen

Fred Allen - April 27 at 11:38 PM