

Frank Gordon Mahady

Died: August 18, 1992

Skip died at 3:45 a.m. on Tuesday, August 18, 1992, at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Hanover. He was 53 years old. A hospital spokeswoman said his death was caused by respiratory failure due to cancer. Skip had been fighting the cancer before, in 1988, again in 1990, and in the winter before he died.

Skip grew up in White River Junction, Vermont. In high school there he had been successively vice-president and president of his class. He was also in the honor society, on the school newspapers, and on its debating team.

At Dartmouth he majored in economics, was a member of Delta Sigma Rho fraternity, and had been in the Russian club for one year and mountaineering club for two.

His ambition was to become a lawyer. To this end, he was a member of the forensic union all four years, and for the first two a member of the pre-law club. His roommate their sophomore year, and our classmate, Stu Kaufman, wrote in an e-mail remembrance in June 2010 that Skip's "passion was the law, and he had a successful but too brief career." Stu also wrote that Skip "suffered with uncomplaining grace from having lost one eye to a BB gun as a teenager."

After Dartmouth, Skip went to Georgetown University, from which he graduated in 1964 and where he became friends with Patrick Leahy, who later became a U.S. Senator from Vermont. Senator Leahy was a Democrat, and Skip was a liberal Republican, who later went as a delegate to the 1972 Republican convention. The two remained friends over the years. The Senator was best man at Skip's wedding in Norwich, Vermont during the 1970's.

Senator Leahy is quoted as saying Skip had a "brilliant mind," and in a class they took together in law school, "there was no question about it, he was the brightest person in the class."

Over the 28 years between law school and his death, Skip was a state's attorney, a deputy attorney general for the state, in the private practice of law, and served as a district court from 1982 until he died.

In his 1986 Reflection for our 25th Reunion yearbook, Skip recalls successfully prosecuting a man in 1968 who had shot gunned the home of black minister who had recently moved to the small Vermont town of Irasburg. Until Skip became involved, a police cover-up had precluded an

Frank Gordon Mahady

Page 2

investigation. The man ultimately convicted was the son of a prominent local businessman.

Skip also recalled a ruling he had made as a judge releasing from custody 112 children who had been taken from their parents at a fundamentalist Christian commune on the basis of both “flimsy evidence” and as part of a “grossly illegal scheme” concocted by the group’s opponents. The return of the children to their parents, Skip wrote, resulted in his being named “Vermont of the Year” in 1984.

In 1991 Skip, as a judge, ruled that a dog — ordered by local officials in St. Albans, Vermont, to be destroyed for killing a neighbor’s dog — had to be returned to its Abenaki Indian owners because it was considered a “religious symbol.” So says a report in *The New York Times* on April 4, 1991.

Skip received many honors over the years, including an honorary degree from St. Michael’s College near Burlington, Vermont, and a 1990 Civil Liberties award from the Vermont chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). After his death, the Vermont Senate and House of Representatives passed a Joint Resolution ordering that the new Addison County courthouse in Middlebury, Vermont be named the “Judge Frank Mahady Courthouse.”

Skip’s death left those who knew him bereft. In an article in *The Valley News*, Senator Leahy said “this was something we all knew was coming because he was so sick, but a lot of people aren’t going to realize until later what a tremendous judge he was, and what a great deal he gave to the state of Vermont.”

Stu Kaufman remembers his roommate as bringing “a wonderful, open, probing intelligence to everything that crossed his path. He was always on target emotionally and intellectually, and in an important sense was a perfect Dartmouth undergrad, mixing those qualities in equal measure. He was well liked and admired by those who knew him. He was part of the Dartmouth of our years, and gave much to it. He died too young, with too much left to do. I miss him.”

Skip had served Dartmouth as a regional agent for the Alumni Fund and was active in the Dartmouth Club of the Upper Valley.

He had two daughters, Shannon and Tara.