

Daniel Irving Reith

Died: June 14, 2010

Dan died at 3:40 p.m. on June 14, 2010, at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula after a long struggle with prostate cancer. Members of his family were at his side. He was 71 years old. Dan was cremated and his ashes were scattered in Monterey Bay and at his cabin on the American River at Kyburz in the Sierras.

It will perhaps not offend family members whose communications about Dan's last hours have been widely circulated to report that Dan's passing was said to be quiet and painless, and that he requested to be let go. Though he was very weak near the end, one said, "he mutters the odd few words with his usual wit."

Dan came to Dartmouth from Sacramento, where at Sacramento Senior High School he was class president, on the newspaper, and played football.

He was an English Honors major at Dartmouth, and a member of Psi Upsilon fraternity, serving a stint as its social chairman. He was on the sophomore orientation committee and the council on student organizations. He wrote for The Dartmouth during his first two years and was in the film society during all four years. The Aegis reports he won the Arbuckle Award.

After Dartmouth, Dan went to Boalt Hall Law School at the University of California at Berkeley, where he received his law degree in 1964.

He made the decision on graduating to set up practice in Pacific Grove on the Monterey Peninsula in California, and so moved southwest from Berkeley to the central California coast (John Steinbeck country, to some who know it). There he met Susan, an artist, and they married in the early 1970's.

"I can say that coming out of law school I consciously selected a small town practice over opportunities in big city law firms, a corporate law department or state government; and I have rarely regretted the decision. Finding and marrying my wife Susan 30 years ago has helped confirm the wisdom of my choice," Dan wrote in 2001 for our 40th Reunion Yearbook.

The wisdom of Dan's choice is further confirmed by the fact that his home during those years was about 2.5 miles from where his office was located, and was one mile from perhaps one of the most gorgeous stretches of the Pacific Ocean in California.

There he maintained a law practice for the next 45 years, specializing primarily in family law, with a small law firm at first, then on his own. Along the way he taught some law courses at a nearby college. After he retired and for seven years or so before he passed away, he volunteered with the California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) program. He received numerous honors and awards for his public service.

What his work meant to the community he served, his colleagues, and others, can be glimpsed from the comments posted at the site that hosts his online obituary.

“A fine man with a terrific sense of humor and a zest for helping those less fortunate. We'll miss you, Dan,” writes one. Another writes, “We were so fortunate to have Dan with us at CRLA for the past 7 years; he handled all of our guardianship cases and was an excellent advocate for some very heart breaking cases. We miss him very much and will never forget everything that he did.” A “good man with a big heart,” “compassionate,” and “admired and respected,” others wrote.

Dan loved rugby, though he didn't play it. This drew the attention of some of our classmates, like Tom Conger. “One of the premier good guys. We bonded early and often — he even tolerated me calling him Irving,” Tom writes. “Early on in alumni-hood he saw where the old traditions were not failing within the DRFC [Dartmouth Rugby Football Club], and became a loyal rugby supporter, having never even played himself. Always tried to get with him and Susan at reunions, most of which he attended.”

Our classmate Ray Thompson, who did play Rugby and knew Dan in California, wrote that Dan “was known for both his brilliance and his puckish humor.”

Ray and another one of Dan's friends collaborated on a remembrance. They wrote that Dan “was an absolutely devoted baseball fan. For over 45 years, he regularly trekked, first for a couple days and after retirement for weeks at a time, to the San Francisco Giants spring practices in Arizona. During the season he and his local buddies usually followed the team's games on TV at “Danny I's” Restaurant and Bar at the Monterey Airport. [The name is coincidental.]”

“The other of Dan's greatest pleasures,” Ray and his collaborator write, “was spending time at his cabin in the Sierras on the American River at Kyburz. Claims of Dan's catching trout while sitting on the front porch were reportedly captured on film!”

Classmate Glenn Gemelli wrote, “today we lost a brother! ... I have some great memories of his jolly soul from school days and occasional reunion moments. My heartfelt condolences to those who feel his loss and my wish that cherished memories will soothe your grief. Tonight I'll raise my glass to ‘another ball game’ - or at least extra innings.”

“So sorry to hear that we lost one of the ‘good guys.’ We all have great memories of our ‘social director’!” writes Bill Farrens, another member of our class.

Pat Irish '61 writes, “I am devastated. I talked with him last week, and although he sounded very weak, he was still looking ahead. After having missed so many

Scottsdale opportunities [San Francisco Giants spring practice], I had cleared the deck for next spring and told him so. I so looked forward to it. I feel like I kind of let him down; something he never did to me. We will miss him.”

And another of our classmates, Skip Kendall, weighs in. “My best memory of Dan was his laugh and the joy he got from things he thought were funny. Fifty years later I can remember how animated he was when having a big laugh about most anything. What a good guy!”

Dan was a college enrollment interviewer for many years.

Dan was survived by his wife Susan of 39 years. He had two stepchildren, Louis and Regina, with whose husband, Brendan Doyle, he was particularly close.