

In Memorium

Denver H. Nelson, M.D. 1941 - 2021



Denver Nelson peacefully passed away on February 28, 2021, after suffering a stroke.

Denver was born in Spencer, Iowa in October 1941 to Harold and Loramae Nelson. He left Spencer at 17 and attended the University of Iowa. He finished his undergraduate degree, medical school, and a 6 year residency in neurosurgery at Stanford University. Before he began his residency, he left Stanford for 2 years and served in the US Airforce as a flight surgeon in Vietnam, where he was awarded the Bronze Star.

He met and married Judy, who was a nurse in Stanford's ICU. After his residency, he took his first job as a neurosurgeon in Anchorage, Alaska. One year later, in 1977, he moved to Eureka, where he worked as a neurosurgeon until his retirement in 2002.

He was a man with many hobbies and interests. He loved cars and motorcycles, worked on engines, flew drones, small planes and helicopters, and raced jet boats on rivers in California, Oregon, and Idaho. He was a woodworker, a pilot (he owned a Bonanza at one time), enjoyed air shows, and climbed Mount Rainier in 1969. He owned logging trucks and timber properties.

He loved exploring National Parks, the backroads of America, and especially his yearly trips to Iowa to check on his corn and soybeans.

He was involved in many different organizations over the years: Humboldt-Del Norte Medical Society, The Ingomar Club (he enjoyed being a docent there), Humboldt County Planning Commission, Historical Society, Buckeye Conservancy, North Coast Air Quality Advisory Board, Humboldt County Fish & Game Commission, Salt River Watershed Council, Redwood Park Conservancy, Mobile Medical Clinic, and Humboldt County Farm Bureau.

He was a volunteer at the Redwood National and State Park for 18 years and a Humboldt County election poll worker for 4 years.

Denver had friends from all different walks of life. If you were a friend of Denver's, you knew it. If you weren't a friend of Denver's, you probably knew that too. He was opinionated and was always up for a debate. If he felt strongly enough about a topic, you would probably read about it in one of his "My Word" opinion pieces. He always had an inappropriate joke to share. He was a man of few words, but the words he spoke were meaningful and had purpose. He was a fiercely loyal friend and will be

missed by many.

He leaves behind Judy, his wife of 50 years, daughter Kristina Radelfinger, son-in-law Shane, grandson Kyler, granddaughter Sienna, and his beloved yellow lab, Viking.

Very special thanks to the nurses and staff at St. Joseph Hospital, Dr. Tom Rydz, and Dr. Lei Han.

There will be no services.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to one of your favorite charities or the Humboldt-Del Norte County Medical Society Future Physician Scholarship Fund
% Humboldt Area Foundation
363 Indianola Road
Bayside, CA 95524

I think he would appreciate us ending with his favorite quote by his favorite hero, Theodore Roosevelt:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."