

Gale Robert Mellum

Mellum, Gale Robert Gale Robert Mellum, 79, was born in Duluth, Minnesota, on July 5, 1942, to Doris E. Smith Mellum and Lester Andrew Mellum. He passed away on September 18, 2021 in Duluth, MN with his family by his side after a battle with COVID-19, despite having been fully vaccinated. Graduating from Morgan Park High School in 1960 as valedictorian of his class, Gale was also a well-rounded athlete. He became a true self-made man, working at various jobs to put himself through college. He was awarded a Hunt Scholarship to attend the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis where he graduated summa cum laude in 1964. He received a full-ride Woodrow Wilson Scholarship to attend Cornell University Graduate School in 1964. He gave up that award a year later to attend the University of Minnesota Law School. There he graduated at the top of his class and received his Juris Doctor (JD) degree, magna cum laude, in 1968. In 2005, Gale established a scholarship at the law school in his name. In 1966, Gale married Julie Murdoch Swanstrom from Duluth. She acknowledges he was her "knight in shining armor." They gave birth to their son, Eric Scott Mellum, in 1968, and to their daughter, Wendy Jane Mellum, in 1969, both in Minneapolis, MN. Gale was a devoted family man who always found time to enjoy his family and attend Eric and Wendy's various activities. He was also very engaged with his grandchildren, rarely missing an event and treating them to new experiences. He instilled in his family a love of the outdoors, the family cabin, sports, academic and intellectual pursuits, and extracurricular and cultural activities, including Broadway musicals, world travel, and fine dining. Gale excelled in his corporate law practice and became a managing partner at the Faegre & Benson law firm. He was in charge of all foreign offices. Gale's career had many highlights. He was influential in his firm's decision to represent the fishing community impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989. He also counseled the Excelsior-Henderson Motorcycle Company on its rebirth of a historic American-made motorcycle. He is featured in books related to these two cases. As one friend and colleague described Gale, "In a profession that worshipped conformity, (he) did it his way and always with a grin that seemed to indicate that (he) had figured out something the rest of us had missed." He was "immensely likeable, unusually so for a lawyer," said another. After "retirement" from Faegre & Benson, he formed his own law firm, Mellum

& Welsh, LLP with his daughter, Wendy, as his partner. He served on the board of directors for a number of innovative companies, guiding them through key phases in their evolution. He became close friends with his clients and enjoyed working with them so much that he never wanted to retire completely. Gale was an amazing friend to many and admired for his "clear thinking, work ethic, goodness, honesty, generosity, acceptance of others, caring, and compassion." We will all remember his kindness, astute sense of humor, and great enjoyment of socializing, fine dining and pontoon rides at the cabin. Gale is preceded in death by his parents Doris and Lester, and his brother, Michael S. Mellum. Gale is survived by his wife, Julie, their son, Eric (Jennifer Dare Smith Mellum), daughter, Wendy (Craig Alan Mellum Welsh), his grandson, Otto, and granddaughter, Kaysa. He is also survived by nephews Marc and Brent Mellum, John Swanstrom, and nieces, Jennifer Swanstrom and Sally S. Raih. Additionally, Gale is survived by Patricia Gullie and her kids, Precious, Burgess and O'Shia, to whom Gale was a father figure. Near the end of his life, Gale was committed to educating others and encouraging them to get vaccinated, if they weren't already, to prevent others suffering from COVID-19. Please help stop this pandemic in his name.

Published on September 26, 2021

Guest Book

10 comments

Star Tribune reviews all guest book entries to ensure appropriate content. Our staff does not correct grammar or spelling. [FAQ \(https://www.startribune.com/obituary-guest-book-f-a-q/238868691/\)](https://www.startribune.com/obituary-guest-book-f-a-q/238868691/)

Share memories or condolences

Publish as Submit

Joanne and Sam Rosenstein 4:24pm

Gale was a true gentleman who was kind to everyone, regardless of perceived status or job. He never showed an ounce of stress or agitation despite consistently leading "bet the company" matters as a lawyer. He knew how to enjoy life and help others do the same. He will be greatly missed by many. Our deepest condolences to Julie and family.

REPLY

Thomas Jones 3:17pm

I hope that what I write here in memory of Gale R Mellum will bring some comfort to Julie, his children, extended family, and friends. In any listing of thoughtful, caring, good humored, and important friends, Gale would be right up at the top. He always gave me good advice and support in our years as students at the University. (And who else would share his Mom's casseroles and goodies with his hungry roommates?). After graduation, we both headed off to Cornell University with graduate fellowships in hand. Gale made a key decision to move back to Minneapolis for law school, setting the stage for his lasting romance with Julie. His career as a lawyer and in civic life speaks for itself as does his deep love for his family. I will miss him that fine fellow.

REPLY

John Rajala 12:41pm

Gale was a fraternity big brother to me. He always had an open door and was a great role model. What a wonderful career and family!

REPLY

Roberta Collard Anderson 12:26pm

Sending sympathy and prayers to Julie and Gayle Mellum's extended family and friends. I am from the class of '60. Rest In Peace Gayle.

REPLY

Jack McGuire 10:10am

My condolences To you Julie and your family

REPLY

Jim and Merrie Stolpestad  9:11am

This is shocking news to many of Gale's long-time friends going back to college. Our deepest condolences to Julie and family.

 REPLY

Karen Benson Hanson  8:59am


My sympathy to you and your family, Julie
Many memories of all the happy times help you through your loss.

 REPLY

John Polley  8:33am


Gale was a wonderful partner and friend. In recent years, pre-COVID, we often ran into each other at the Y and shared stories of days gone by, from hockey to law, politics and people. He was a great conversationalist, straight shooter, and wonderful human being. My sincere condolences.

 REPLY

Betty Pfeifer and family  September 26

Julie, our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family.

 REPLY

Marcine Edgar  September 25

So sorry for your loss, Julie, My condolences to you and your family.

 REPLY