

Press Release

In Memoriam: Russell L. Munsch (1955-2017)

02.21.17

The Munsch Hardt family suffered an incalculable loss on Monday with the passing of our beloved colleague, friend and co-founder, Russell L. Munsch.

Russ genuinely loved the practice of law, which was evident throughout his remarkable, nearly 40-year career. His unwavering passion and fine-tuned skill left a lasting impact on both those who worked alongside him and opposite him in the courtroom. He was universally respected as an outstanding bankruptcy attorney and an even better person.

"He was just really one of the finest lawyers I have ever known," said Steve Harr, a Shareholder and another co-founder of Munsch Hardt. "He was a lawyer's lawyer and every one of us in the firm has a better career because of it."

Thirty-two years ago, on April 15, 1985, Russ and five of his fellow associates were energized by the entrepreneurial spirit in Dallas and decided to leave one of the city's largest law firms to form what is today Munsch Hardt Kopf & Harr, P.C. While it was not an easy decision, Russ felt fortunate to start a firm with his closest friends, stating "there are very few times in life you can work with people you like and trust."

Russ was a driving force in the firm's early success. In 1988, Russ was hired to represent billionaire Nelson Bunker Hunt in one of the largest personal bankruptcy cases in U.S. history. This monumental case marked just the beginning of Russ' career and served as a key turning point for the young firm. As his reputation grew, he went on to serve as counsel in a number of high-profile bankruptcy cases, including Enron Corporation, Coho Energy Corporation, Northwest Airlines, Dow Corning Corporation, The Southland Corporation, and Columbia Gas Transmission Company, to name a few.

"Russ could take something that was exceedingly complicated, boil it down and present it in a simple way in which the court could easily understand," stated Rick Kopf, another shareholder and co-founder of the firm. "He was a guy who challenged everybody. He was very inquisitive, very confrontational, and when issues would arise, he'd debate them, causing us to re-think many decisions. At the end of the day, he provided great guidance to the firm and every attorney who was fortunate enough to interact with him."

Throughout his career, Russ served in various positions within the firm, including Chairman, Chief Executive Officer and as a member of the firm's Management and Compensation committees. While Russ continued to support the firm by serving in various administrative roles, he had retired from the active practice of law. This afforded him the opportunity to do what he loved almost more than his legal career – playing golf. Russ developed his golf skills later in life after being invited (and initially turning down the opportunity) to play at Augusta National Golf Club with a client. While it was an inauspicious start to his golf career, Russ went on to travel the world, playing some of the top courses of all time with his family and friends.

Russ was also an active member within his community. Keeping in-line with his passion for golf, he was an active member of the board for First Tee of Greater Austin, a program focused on teaching today's youth the game of golf and its inherent values. Russ was instrumental in the organization's leadership, as well as in personally instructing children on the golf course. He also loved music. Russ played guitar in a local Rock & Roll band

called Square Grooves, a golf term for a club head design that has caused controversy over the years for giving professional golfers an unfair advantage.

Russ grew up in Grand Prairie, Texas, where he started on the high school football team. He went on to graduate *magna cum laude* from The University of Texas at Austin and *cum laude* from the University of Houston Law Center.

By far the most important aspect of Russ's life was his family. He was a loving husband to his high school sweetheart, Sheri, and father to his beloved daughter, Rachel. Russ will be missed greatly by all those who had the honor of knowing him.

"We are deeply saddened by his death on a number of fronts. Russ was a trusted and invaluable resource. He and our other founders did a great job of transitioning leadership opportunities to others; however, he was a great source of wisdom and I called on him often," said Phil Appenzeller, CEO of Munsch Hardt. "Russ leaves behind a remarkable career of exceptional service to both his profession and his community. "

A one hour service honoring the life and legacy of Russell L. Munsch will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 11, 2017 at Barton Creek Resort in Austin, Texas. A second reception will be held in Dallas, Texas. Details regarding the date, time, and location for the Dallas service will be forthcoming.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation in Russ's name to the American Cancer Society (ovarian cancer research) or to The First Tee of Greater Austin (Russ Munsch Scholarship Fund).

Primary Contacts



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Austin