

SCOTT KENNEDY: 1948-2011

ACTIVIST, FORMER MAYOR, 62, DIES

Kennedy co-founded the Resource Center for Nonviolence in Santa Cruz

By JESSICA M. PASKO and J.M. BROWN

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✓ SANTA CRUZ — Scott Kennedy, a two-time former mayor of Santa Cruz who as a founder of the Resource Center for Nonviolence established himself as a pre-eminent voice on peaceful conflict resolution and provided an often controversial but measured voice on the heated issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, died Saturday at his home on the Westside. He was 62.

Kennedy spent almost his entire life working to promote social change and help those who were less fortunate, with much of that work done through the center, which he co-founded in 1976. He was a man who would go out of his way to help others, and was stubbornly driven.



KENNEDY

Kennedy was known for being passionate, intelligent and at times intense, and many are calling his death a huge loss for the community. Friends and colleagues remember him as someone who had an amazing energy and would go out of his way to help others, and someone who had a sharp sense of humor.

In his political career, as in his advocacy, he was dedicated and tenacious.

"Serving with him was always a challenge because he was so damned smart," said City Councilwoman Katherine Beiers, a former mayor with whom Kennedy served

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on the council. "He was one of the smartest people I've ever known and he had an incredible wit."

She described him as someone who was always forthright about his agenda, and someone from whom she learned a lot.

Kennedy served on the City Council from 1991 to 1998, serving as mayor in 1994. He served on the council again from 2001-2003 with a second term as mayor in 2004.

Kennedy demonstrated fierce commitment to doing good in the world and was a champion of many causes. He co-founded the Resource Center for Nonviolence in Santa Cruz with a mission of promoting the principles of nonviolent social change and enhancing the quality of life. Middle Eastern issues were hugely important to Kennedy and he was coordinator of the center's Middle East program. He led a number of trips to Israel and Palestine, and had returned from a two-week trip to the Gaza Strip just a week before his death.

His family said that while he'd had some health problems, his death came as a huge shock.

"My dad had so much love for the world and really dedicated himself to his work," said his oldest son, Peter Kennedy, adding that he was glad his father had been able to take one final trip to the Middle East.

In August, the whole family had traveled to Algeria for Kennedy's daughter's second anniversary of her marriage to a French-Algerian man. The Kennedys, hosted by their daughter's in-laws, spent three weeks in the Kabyle Region northeast of Algiers and visited the ancestral village of Ighil Hammad in the Berber mountains.

Kennedy met Peter Klotz-Chamberlin when they were freshmen at UC Santa Cruz, and the two would later go on to help found the Resource Center for Nonviolence of Santa Cruz.

"He was really driven to bring people together to cre-

BIOGRAPHY

SCOTT KENNEDY

BORN: Dec. 9, 1948

DIED: Nov. 19, 2011

HOME: Santa Cruz

OCCUPATION: Co-founder of Resource Center for Nonviolence of Santa Cruz

EDUCATION: UC Santa Cruz

COMMUNITY

INVOLVEMENT: Served on City Council from 1991 to 1998, and from 2001-2003. Served as mayor in 1994 and 2004.

SURVIVORS: He is survived by his wife Kris, a retired Santa Cruz City teacher, and by his three children, Peter Kennedy, 35, of Santa Cruz, Benjamin Kennedy of Bonny Doon and Megan Grace Kennedy, 29, of Paris.



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Scott Kennedy, Said Chouane, Kris and Megan Kennedy, Melaid and Rahim Chouane at the remains of the former mosque in Algeria. Kris and Scott Kennedy traveled in July to Algeria, North Africa, for a second anniversary celebration hosted by their in-laws.

ate community," said Klotz-Chamberlin. "He had an amazing energy."

The Resource Center won't be the same without Kennedy, he said, but its work will continue.

"There's going to be over a dozen organizations that are going to be wondering what they're going to do without Scott," said Klotz-Chamberlin.

Kennedy was a leading advocate for affordable housing, among other issues, and according to city Police Chief Kevin Vogel, was instrumental in founding the Citizens Police Review Board, which was disbanded due to budget cuts.

Vogel remembered Kennedy as a thoughtful leader, one who sent him hand-written letters each of the four times Vogel was promoted on the force, including in 2010 when Vogel was named chief.

"He was the only council member who did that," Vogel said.

He noted also that Kennedy was instrumental in founding the Citizens Police Review Board, which was disbanded due to budget cuts.

Kennedy became friends with current Vice Mayor Don Lane more than 20 years ago, when Kennedy was first elected to the City Council.

"We worked very closely together," he said. "We

remained friends after that and we'd often talk about politics. We kept a really good friendship."

Kennedy often received backlash for his outspokenness on Middle East issues, and critics often accused of him of being pro-Palestine and anti-Israel. He received criticism from many who thought he was being insensitive to the Jewish and Israeli communities,

In an op-ed published in the Sentinel on Feb. 13, 2011, Kennedy addressed mail he'd received after the Resource Center hosted a member of the Palestine Fair Trade Association, in which the writers accused him of being pro-terrorist and anti-American.

"Discussion of Palestinians or Muslims often degenerates into such attacks," he wrote. "The argument may be more nuanced, but the message is the same: Islam equals ter-

rorism. Violence is too often portrayed as distinctively Muslim, as though terrorists represent 1.5 billion Muslims."

Lane said he always believed Kennedy genuinely took the position that both sides of the conflict had legitimate concerns and that he worked hard to try to bring the two sides together in non-violent ways.

In November 2007, Sentinel reporter Shanna McCord traveled to Israel and the West Bank with Kennedy and a Washington-based group he was heavily involved with called Interfaith Peace Build-



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Scott Kennedy speaks with members of a group that traveled with him to the West Bank in November 2007.

ers. The trip was designed to educate people about the historic and ongoing feud between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

"He never tried to paint a picture of being a neutral guy. He had a deep and unwavering passion for the plight of the Palestinians," said McCord. "He felt that the more people knew about the divide between Jews and Arabs, the better chance there would be for peace there."

His tenacity and passion could sometimes be off-putting or combative, say those who knew him.

"He had an absolute commitment to what he thought was right and just and I loved that about him," said longtime friend Geoffrey Dunn, a writer, filmmaker and political activist. "He was very passion-

ate and intense and that could sometimes make it difficult to work with him."

Above all, Kennedy remained a strong symbol of peaceful activism for many in the community.

In 2010, he was the recipient of the 2010 Pfeffer Peace Prize, an honor for international human rights, justice, and peace work which has been awarded by the Fellowship of Reconciliation since 1989.

"His name is synonymous with peace and nonviolence," said former principal of Bay View Elementary, Dan Cavanaugh, who worked with Kennedy's wife, Kris Kennedy, at the Santa Cruz school for several years. "And it's synonymous with how Santa Cruz looked at and related to world issues."