



# Ex-Santa Cruz councilman Mo Reich dies of cancer at 56

**Reich**

Resigned under pressure weeks after being elected.

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**SANTA CRUZ** — Mo Reich, a former member of the Santa Cruz City Council whose off-color sense of humor ended his political career, died Sunday of cancer. He was 56.

Reich aligned himself with the progressives who took the reins of Santa Cruz city politics in the early 1980s.

He was appointed to the Planning Commission in 1983, and in 1988, John Laird, a council member at the time, persuaded him to run for City Council.

Reich, though aligned with other progressive candidates, ran on a pro-business platform, saying small businesses had not been given the political credit they were due. He wanted a hotel in the beach area, and said that if auto dealers left the city, as they were threatening, Santa Cruz should annex Live Oak to recoup the tax base.

After a contentious campaign with

17 candidates, Reich was elected, along with progressives Jane Yokoyama, Don Lane and non-progressive John Mahaney, giving the council a solid five-of-seven-member majority.

He was in office just three months before controversy erupted over an off-color Valentine's Day card. The card, with a cover photograph of a woman holding an upraised middle finger and an obscene message, was given to Steve Hartman, an unsuccessful council candidate. It was signed by Reich, Lane and Yokoyama.

Another card just like it, but anonymous, was sent to the Rev. Glennon Culwell, who had just helped put together an invitation to a Navy ship over the council's objection.

Hartman fanned a prairie fire of protest over the card sent to him and eventually the three council members apologized.

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## Reich

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All three denied sending the card to Culwell.

But after several handwriting experts said Reich's handwriting was on the card, Reich resigned.

Culwell said Tuesday he harbored no ill feelings toward Reich.

"Actually, I got a good laugh out of it," said Culwell, noting Reich had called him to apologize.

Hartman said he still believes Reich should have resigned, but that he shouldn't have been the only one.

"All three of them should have resigned," he said. "All three of them were a part of it. ... The one thing that bothered me the most is that I thought Mo was probably the best of the council candidates elected that year."

"I'm sorry to see him gone, and compared to what we have now, I might have even welcomed him to

the council," Hartman said.

"In reflection, it is pretty hard to believe what a stupid thing we did, and that it took on the magnitude that it did," Lane said Tuesday. "It was really nothing in a way, and yet at the same time, it was."

Reich thought giving the card to Hartman would be "funny, not this powerfully insulting thing," Lane said.

After his resignation, Reich disappeared from the political landscape.

"I think the whole thing with the City Council fray was impactful for him. He really pulled in and after that experience he became much more of a loner," close friend Mitchell Goldstein said.

Reich continued to pursue his other interests. He had an incredible rock collection and liked to collect topographic maps, said friend Carroll LeFleur. He liked to whitewater raft, backpack and travel.

"He had an amazing sense of humor and this wide range of life experience," Laird said.

Goldstein said his friend was "cynical, brilliant, very fast and inclined to shoot himself in the foot on occasion."

But to Goldstein's family, he was simply "Uncle Mo," he said.

Reich was a native of the Bronx, New York, and studied metallurgy, architecture and English literature before settling on a career as an accountant.

He attended Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh, City College of New York, and graduate school in Minnesota and served with the Peace Corps in Chile.

He came to California to do graduate work at Stanford University, where he became active in student politics and demonstrations protesting student shootings at Kent State.

He was months away from earning

his doctorate when he clashed with college administrators because of his political activities, according to Goldstein.

Reich left Stanford because of the conflict. He moved to Santa Cruz in 1976, following Goldstein and his family.

He was one of the founding partners of People's Natural Foods in Felton, an organic food store. He owned his own accounting firm, MoCo, and worked primarily with nonprofit agencies.

He is survived by his mother Gertrude Reich of New York, and brother Norman Reich of New York.

A memorial service will be 3:30 p.m. Friday at the Aptos Seascapes Resort, Peninsula Room, Aptos.

Contributions are preferred to the Santa Cruz AIDS Research Foundation, P.O. Box 7423, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.