

Judge Hall dies of rare heart ailment

Retired Santa Cruz County Superior Judge Roland "Rollie" Kiefer Hall, 47, died unexpectedly Saturday in Dominican Hospital of a rare heart ailment. He had been hospitalized during the week and his health had improved, until he suffered a relapse.

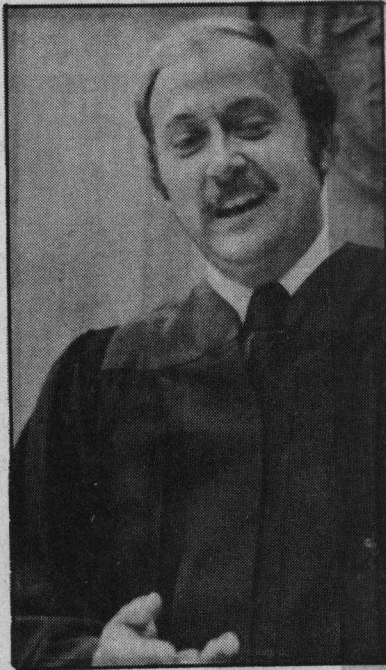
Hall's heart condition forced him to retire from the bench in 1985 after serving as superior court judge for nine years.

Members of the Santa Cruz legal community were shocked and saddened by Hall's death. Among the county's judges, Hall was one of the most popular because of his fairness and good humor.

"His primary attribute on the bench was his ability to make people feel comfortable in his courtroom," Public Defender Jon Minsloff, a longtime friend, said. "He had a way of demystifying the (legal) process so that people weren't intimidated by it."

Hall defused conflict with his sense of humor, which was a constant companion, Minsloff said.

"He always had a great sense of humor and a twinkle in his eye," Superior Court Judge



JUDGE HALL
In 1980 file photo

John Marlo, a former law partner of Hall's, said.

"Whenever you saw him he always had a funny story to tell you," District Attorney Art

Danner said. "They were always shaggy dog-type stories, situations that really made you laugh. He had a real good sense of humor. He was someone who really liked to laugh."

At monthly meetings of an informal book club, "the first half hour we'd all have to endure Rollie telling horrible jokes," Minsloff said.

Hall's sense of humor made him a better judge, his peers said.

"I don't think anyone ever walked out of his court angry," Judge Marlo, who was also Hall's skiing partner, said. "There should be some lightness in the law and it should be approached with a sense of humor, and Rollie had an innate ability to do that without demeaning the importance of the proceedings."

"He was an excellent judge,"

Minsloff said, "and he was a helluva guy."

"He was a good judge and one that will be sorely missed by those of us who valued him as a legal mind and as a personal friend," Danner said.

Marlo ordered several minutes of silence in his courtroom this morning in honor of Hall.

Hall was born in Cape Girardeau, Mo., and lived there until he enrolled at UC-Berkeley, graduating in 1961. He attended Hastings College of Law, graduating in 1964.

His first job was as an assistant state attorney general in Sacramento, followed by two years as assistant district attorney in Modesto.

He then moved to Santa Cruz, where he served as county assistant district attorney for

two years. He went into private practice, also serving as Capitola city attorney during that period.

Gov. Jerry Brown appointed Hall to the Santa Cruz the newly-created Superior Court Department in 1977, where he served until his retirement.

Hall enjoyed music and books, and was an avid tennis player and skier.

He leaves his wife, Bobbie, a son, Roland Jr., and a daughter, Sabrina, all of Santa Cruz; and three brothers, Frank Hall, Dr. James Hall and Dr. John Hall, all of Missouri.

Services will be held tomorrow at 2 p.m. at Norman's Family chapel, 3620 Soquel Drive, Soquel, followed by burial in Oakwood Memorial Park.