



Nancy Stanley

August 18, 1943 - March 19, 2025

Nancy Elizabeth (Schmid) Stanley, an attorney and mediator, died March 19, 2025, from complications of bile duct cancer. Born into a Czech immigrant community in Cicero, Illinois and receiving early education in a rural, two-room schoolhouse, she followed her love of learning and literature to build a distinguished legal career and make substantial contributions to the women's rights movement as an activist and litigator. Later she worked in federal communications law and then in mediation.

Stanley was born on August 18, 1943 to Marie Kolarik and Frank Schmid.

Skipping a grade in early childhood led to Stanley graduating from high school in 1960 at the age of 16, and left her with memories of being bullied that fueled a lifelong fire for activism.

Stanley's focus on women's rights started at Knox College in Galesburg, IL, where she graduated in 1964 after a junior year at the University of Edinburgh (1962-63). In her senior year she co-led a successful campaign to end the discriminatory "women's hours" policy that forced female students back to their dorms by a certain hour.

Stanley graduated with honors from George Washington National Law Center in Washington DC in 1970. She and other law students persuaded the dean to

start a new course on Women and the Law. In a later year, Stanley taught that very course. She helped lead another group of lawyers and law students to start a new organization: the Women's Legal Defense Fund, now known as the National Partnership for Women and Families. She served on WLDF's initial screening committee, which held its first meeting in the GW women's restroom.

While still at GW, Stanley worked with Jean and Edgar Cahn, trailblazing activist lawyers who were establishing a GW course. She developed their curriculum for the course over a three-day weekend. She also learned about their work on racial discrimination in television programming, which inspired her in a new direction. She developed a strategy paralleling the Cahns' work for challenging the sex-discriminatory programming and employment practices of television networks through challenges to network licensing before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Her article, "Federal Communications Law and Women's Rights: Women in the Wasteland Fight Back," which appeared in *Hastings Law Journal* in 1971, supported women's campaigns against ABC and NBC, which helped lead greater inclusion of women in network television programming. Years later, using this strategy, Stanley and her law partner Jan Goodman won a \$2,000,000 sex discrimination settlement from NBC in New York City.

After graduating from law school, Stanley talked her way into a job with newly elected Congresswoman Bella Abzug. The story, which Stanley loved to tell, is that she traveled from DC to New York City in a blizzard to meet Abzug at her apartment in the Village, where she told Abzug that she should hire her to work on women's rights. Abzug replied, "Well, you know, I'm not really into women's rights." Stanley often said, "I am immodest enough to claim when I tell this story that I turned Bella Abzug into a feminist."

From 1971-1973, Ms. Stanley was an appellate attorney in the General Counsel's Office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), where she worked on cases involving race and sex discrimination, including discrimination against pregnant employees. She argued in federal court that a California anti-pregnancy provision violated women's right to equality under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The federal district court struck down the law in *Aiello v. Hansen* in 1973. However, the Supreme Court reversed that ruling in an infamous 1974 decision, *Geduldig v. Aiello*, leaving new mothers without pay for their time off giving birth.

From 1973-1977, Stanley was a partner in a small women's law firm in New York City, Blank, Goodman, Rone and Stanley, which specialized in sex-discrimination cases.

In September 1977, Ms. Stanley returned to Washington, D.C., where she joined the U.S. Justice Department, in the Civil Rights Division initially (until May 1978), and then in the Land and Natural Resources Division (until November 1980). While there she worked with Barbara Babcock, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division, on a project for President Carter to appoint more women judicial candidates. She contributed to the effort that led the President to appoint Judge Stephanie Kulp Seymour to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit in 1979.

In November 1980, she became an Assistant General Counsel at the FCC, where she worked until July 1989. She loved the work and found her colleagues very compatible. The work environment also gave her the freedom to have and raise her daughter, Julia Reischel, with her husband, Chuck Reischel. During this time, she also developed a strong interest and expertise in mediation as a better method to end many lawsuits.

In August 1989, she landed her dream job: Director of Dispute Resolution for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. There she assigned cases to mediators who were trained by the program; she or her deputy also mediated cases. She stayed there until she retired in July 2007.

Her husband, Chuck Reischel, predeceased her in 2004. A previous husband, Eliot Stanley, survives her. Stanley declined to change her name a second time when she remarried, always explaining that she had made her contributions to feminism under the Stanley name and would not change it. Stanley's other survivors include her daughter, Julia Reischel, her granddaughter, Ruby Harris, her sister Barbara Coombs Lee, and niece Sarah Vandervoort and nephew David Vandervoort, each with two daughters.

A memorial service in celebration of her life will be held on Saturday, September 13, 2025, at the Quaker Meeting House from 2-5 p.m. 2111 Decatur Place NW (off Florida Avenue), Washington D.C. 20008-1912. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to Fistula Foundation, <https://fistulafoundation.org/>, and Compassion & Choices | End-of-Life Resources, <https://compassionandchoices.org/>.

Previous Events

Service

SEP **13**. 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

Quaker Meeting House
2111 Decatur Place NW
Washington , DC 20018

Tribute Wall

CD

“ I knew Nancy as a friend and colleague at the FCC. We met when Nancy was assigned to represent the Commission and me in a lawsuit brought in connection with a hearing case in which I was lead counsel. What followed was a friendship that I value immensely. I was frequenting many of the art galleries in the DuPont circle area and Nancy would often accompany me while I struggled with deciding which item to pick. One of the galleries was the Jane Haslem Gallery. Ultimately Nancy and her husband Chuck developed close friendship with Ms Haslem. I was lucky to know Nancy and I offer my condolences to her family and friends.

Chuck Dziedzic

Chuck Dziedzic - May 26, 2025 at 10:06 AM

BL

Thank you for writing, Chuck. If you share your email address by sending an email to Nancy's email address, nancystanley043@gmail.com, we will make sure you receive an invitation to her memorial service September 13.

Barbara Coombs Lee - July 15, 2025 at 11:04 PM

LD

“ I went to law school at George Washington National Law School in 1969, so I have known Nancy and we have been close friends since then. She was also close with my husband Bob who died this past year and she and Chuck and my husband and I vacationed together. I have many memories of Nancy and a couple of them really stand out. When Chuck had ALS he and Nancy traveled to Atlanta to see a doctor who was offering an experimental treatment. We traveled from Florida to Atlanta to be with them. When we asked Chuck if there anything we could bring with us from Florida Chuck asked if we could please bring our dogs, Hody and Happy. When we arrived at the hotel where we were staying I knocked on their door and Chuck asked if he could see the dogs, and both our shar pei llhasa apsa boys went right in and immediately to Chuck. Another memory that I will never forget on that visit was of Chuck slightly reclining and dozing, and Nancy wanting to talk to his doctor. She asked me to take her place in holding his hand, which of course I was happy to do. A short time later Chuck woke up and saw that it was Linda instead of Nancy, and immediately looked for Nancy, seeing her across the room with the doctor. When Chuck saw Nancy, a look came over his face of complete love, trust, peace and reliance. I don't think I have ever seen such a look of love and trust from one person to another. Chuck and Nancy were both intense people, but they had the power to make each other loved, calm and serene. It was a gift that they found in each other because they were soulmates. Bob and Chuck were of the same mind that they could not understand why anyone would want a little boy when they could have the gift of a daughter., and Nancy and I loved hearing them talk about their girls.

Linda Dorian - May 05, 2025 at 04:53 PM

JZ

Linda, I knew Nancy but not like you did. What you wrote is beautiful.

Jerry Zuckerman - May 08, 2025 at 11:22 AM

BL

Hi Jerry, this is Barbara, Nancy's sister. Please send an email to nancystanley043@gmail.com so that we can invite you to her meorial service September 13th.

Barbara Coombs Lee - July 15, 2025 at 11:06 PM