

By Justin Marceau & Kristen Stilt

It is with both sadness and awe that we honor the remarkable life of Steve Wise. So many of us have had the great privilege to know and learn from Steve, whose singular dedication to the rights of animals is as groundbreaking as it is inspiring.

Many will rightly celebrate Steve's concerted, unilateral focus on personhood cases litigated through habeas corpus. But he was curious about and supportive of many other approaches, too. In the mid 2010's, major animal protection groups and lawyers staked out a consistent position of internally and sometimes publicly decrying grassroots activism and civil disobedience. In 2017, it was commonplace to find lawyers condemning open rescue as antithetical to efforts to see the movement progress. But not Steve. In fact, when Justin met Steve for the first time in person in 2018, Steve made a point of introducing and lauding the work of activists who were engaged in open rescue. In a characteristically Steve moment, he said to Justin, "Oh my gosh. I am so glad those people are doing what they are doing and just wish there was more I could do for them with the law." Likewise, when Steve heard about new academic work that took issue with settled aspects of animal law – such as the decision to lean heavily on criminal prosecutions of individuals – he sought out opportunities to publicize and celebrate these disagreements. He was not just a Quixotic lawyer, he was someone who welcomed debate, disagreement, and evolution within our thinking.

Initially, Steve was the only high-profile animal lawyer to publicly support Justin's research in the book *Beyond Cages*. He did not care that everyone else thought an issue was too hot, or too dangerous. Just as he bucked conventions in other ways, he did not defer to the longstanding experts in the field when it came to what was possible or what amounted to good ideas. Our field is stronger because of Steve's willingness to imagine that how things were was not how they had to be.

Steve was a man of gratitude. Any iconoclast like Steve will at times risk appearing overly confident or too outspoken. And to be sure, Steven had his moments of showmanship and grandeur. But he was also a person of sincerity who was genuinely grateful for opportunities to engage, be hosted, or join a project. Kristen first met Steve in May 2012, when she was teaching at Northwestern Law School. At that time, prior to any litigation, Steve was working to identify which states would be good sites. Steve and his NhRP colleagues had come up with a list of questions they needed answered for 30+ states, questions such as "does the state have statutory habeas corpus." Kristen and a group of Northwestern law students dedicated themselves in the summer of 2012 to researching and writing detailed memos about these states, and the further they got into the work, the more questions—or variables—they thought needed to be addressed for each state. With each group call with Steve, he would thank everyone profusely and reply with great enthusiasm, "let's add that question to the list!" The list grew and grew as the complexities of litigation strategies became more apparent. For Steve, investigating every last detail was not only necessary, it was also an intellectual joy.

And Steve loved sharing his knowledge, whether long-held beliefs or new discoveries. He loved having a microphone and being in front of people. One of Justin's favorite memories involves an occasion where Steve was at the University of Denver for a public lecture. In advance of the

talk, Steve had been warned that there was a rather tight schedule and that he might need to keep his remarks shorter than usual, ideally thirty minutes so that would be time for questions. An hour and ten minutes later, after three ineffective efforts to wrap things up, Justin indelicately joined Steve on the stage at which point Steve boisterously laughed, “I guess they are kicking me off.” He was filled with joy and energy, and he probably could have talked all night. It was the kind of contagious energy that helps build momentum for a cause, and made us all laugh together after the event.

Over the years that we knew him, we worked with him on cases, reviewed briefs, and wrote amicus in support of his litigation, and the earnest gratitude that he expressed always made everyone feel part of his team. For a person who always had dozens of pending invitations, Steve always made people feel that their invitation or request for help was special. Part of the reason that his legacy is so profound is because of the way he touched people through simple kindness and respect.

Steve loved his work, there is no doubt about that. He also impressed upon us how important it is to keep a healthy work and family balance. Steve adored his family. To be in Steve’s company was to see how central his family was in his life. He spoke fondly about running a “dad camp” for his children in the summer when they were younger. He was so kind to Kristen’s eight-year-old daughter, talking to her about school and the formation of her own ideas about life.

What we know from our friend, teacher, colleague, and mentor Steve Wise, is that we must to take what is best and clearest in our hearts, articulate it on the page, and bring it to life in the world through our words and deeds.