

Michael Alan Nelson

March 5, 1942 - August 23, 2025

Michael Alan Nelson, 83, Willcox, AZ, passed away on August 23, 2025, after a short illness. Michael was born March 5, 1942, in Arlington Heights, Illinois. The son of Mary Trask Nelson and Carl Nelson. He was a “ring man” in gymnastics during his adolescence. Michael graduated from Michigan State University in 1965 with a degree in English/teaching. Michael married Kay Pfeiffer on September 3, 1966 and had a loving marriage for almost 59 years. He and Kay moved to Willcox after he received a master's degree at the U of A in 1968 for counseling. Michael loved Willcox and called it his home for 57 years. He worked at Willcox Unified Schools for 38 years. During that time, he was seen as a: school counselor, a teacher, a cross-country coach and wrestling coach. He cherished his students and his community dearly. Michael loved running, biking, hiking, and swimming. But what he loved the most was his family.

Those left to remember Michael's memories are spouse, Kay Nelson; children, Paul Nelson and Kristin Nelson; grandchildren; Tyler Morganstern and Alexis Nelson. Michael will be joining his son, Jon Nelson, in the afterlife; most likely riding motorcycles.

A Celebration of Life will be held 2:00 pm on Sunday, September 14, 2025, at the Willcox Elks Lodge.

Contributions may be made in his name to the Willcox Food Pantry or Charles

Wm Leighton Jr. Hospice.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

SEP **14.** 2:00 PM (MT)

Willcox Elks Lodge 2131
247 E. Stewart St.
Willcox, AZ 85643

Tribute Wall

BD

“ Mike Nelson was a great help to me as a high school student and then a wonderful cross country coach for my granddaughter, Kendel Hale Lee. A wonderful, caring, faithful friends. My prayers are with you Kay and all family. RIP

bonnie diehl - March 05 at 10:43 AM

JN

“ Janet Nunn lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson



Janet Nunn - November 10, 2025 at 01:14 PM

FK

“ Frances Kreger lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson



Frances Kreger - September 14, 2025 at 01:01 PM

WC

“ Truly my favorite teacher. I was fortunate enough to have him for 2 years of English. He was someone you could talk to about anything. He definitely made me a better public speaker. I told him a couple of years ago that as I teach my own students during trying times I often ask myself what would Mr. Nelson do? Kay and family, our greatest condolences for your loss. I hope you find some small comfort in reading these memories and knowing how much he was loved and cherished by the community and past students. He has touched so many lives. Thank you Mr. Nelson for giving us your time in and outside the classroom. You will be truly missed by everyone that knew you.

Wendy Cohorn - September 14, 2025 at 10:59 AM

CG

“ Carolyn G. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Michael Alan Nelson.

Carolyn G. - September 13, 2025 at 12:00 PM

RO

“ Mr. Nelson, you were one of a kind, sir. Without a doubt, my favorite teacher. A man of wisdom, kindness, and common sense. Condolences to Kay and family. Please say hi to Jon for me.

Ray Van Osten - September 10, 2025 at 11:54 PM

MG

“ Mike was a gentleman through and through and the kind of teacher/administrator that someone hopes to have in their life at least once. He was kind, respectful, and held high standards for everyone, including himself. He was a shining light in the education world. Condolences to his family.
Mary Lou Gammon and Family

Mary Lou Gammon - September 09, 2025 at 12:49 PM

CC

“ Craig and Melanie Coder purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Michael Alan Nelson.



Craig and Melanie Coder - September 08, 2025 at 09:06 PM



“ A grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Michael Alan Nelson.

September 08, 2025 at 04:41 PM

LB

“ Mr. Nelson was a favorite of all of his students. He will be missed. Our condolences to his family.

Jean Laird and Beth Barnes-Lesley



L. Beth Barnes-Lesley - September 06, 2025 at 11:35 PM

JD

“ Rest in peace Mr. Nelson you were a Huge mentor for me when I was in HS and showed me a different view of seeing things in life. May you be with God and all his angels and saints forever. God bless your family always! Say hi to my pops when you're up there! A great man was taken away from us

Javier DeLoera - September 01, 2025 at 02:43 PM

CD

“ My deepest condolences to Mrs. Nelson and their whole family. Mr. Nelson was a gifted educator whose lessons have stayed with me for a lifetime. I am grateful I had him as my English teacher in eighth grade. He instilled a love of literature, the curiosity to be a lifelong learner and an approach to reading and writing that I carry with me to this day. May he rest in peace.

Christine Donnelly - September 01, 2025 at 05:35 AM

TT

“ A man of many hats! Coach, mentor, counselor, teacher and all around a good man! He never lost faith in any of his students. He never judged any of his students. He took everybody as they were and tried to help them exceed with what that was! The world is truly less of a place now. My condolences to his family. May he rest in peace.

Tom Tunks - August 30, 2025 at 03:08 PM

FR

“ Fletch Rivera lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson



Fletch Rivera - August 29, 2025 at 06:12 PM

LW

“ *One of the best teachers of all time and such a kind man to everybody! Truly will be missed!* ”



lina weaver - August 28, 2025 at 12:20 PM

GR

“ *Gerri Roberts lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson* ”



Gerri Roberts - August 27, 2025 at 08:50 PM

JC

“ *Mr. Nelson was one-of-a-kind for sure. I have so many memories where he impacted my life in such a positive way, I don't know where to start... He convinced me to "try" cross country and hooked me from the first practice - and I only attended said practice because he made the effort to drive to my house and pick me up, much to my chagrin! Hands down, he was my favorite teacher in high school. He always made time for entertaining and sometimes deep conversations. Rest in peace Mr. Nelson and please say "hi" to Jeff for me.* ”

With Love, Jody

Jody Collup - August 27, 2025 at 06:55 PM

JC

“ Jody Collup lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson



Jody Collup - August 27, 2025 at 06:55 PM

SF

“ Our hearts go out to Kay, Kristin and Paul. Mr. Nelson was such a wonderful man who touched so many lives, and he will be deeply missed. Keeping your family in our thoughts and prayers. May he rest in peace. Love The Sinohui family- Robert, Sylvia, Angela and Adriana



Sinohui Family - August 27, 2025 at 04:03 PM



“ Mr. Nelson was my teacher both my first and last semesters at WHS. It was a pleasure to visit with him at the reunions in 2015 and 2022. I'm glad he was there and I truly enjoyed catching up with him.



John Courington - August 27, 2025 at 02:10 PM

BT

“ A man of great integrity, and a teacher who really cared for his students . Willcox has lost a good man. May god be with the family.

Ben J Travis - August 27, 2025 at 11:45 AM

GA

“ Gussie & Sharon Arzberger sent a virtual gift in memory of Michael Nelson



Gussie & Sharon Arzberger - August 27, 2025 at 09:33 AM



“ I, among many, will miss you dearly. Thank you for your lessons and your care.



Terri Shepard - August 27, 2025 at 01:29 AM

MN

“ Melissa Jean Naugle lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson



Melissa Jean Naugle - August 26, 2025 at 11:31 PM

CB

“ So sorry to hear of your loss. Mike was an exemplary person and teacher. We always appreciate his encouragement to our daughters as they progressed through WHS. He was a great teacher coach and personal. Thank you to him. Our love and sympathy to Kay and family.

craig and Joan Bull - August 26, 2025 at 11:07 PM

SR

“ *Sharma Reed lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson*



Sharma Reed - August 26, 2025 at 05:57 PM

PS

“ *W*

Pedro Salazar - August 26, 2025 at 02:04 PM

RJ

“ *Mr. Nelson was our class Counsellor all through our High School years for the class of 1974. We must have been among his first. It was so good to see him at our 50th reunion last year. He will be greatly missed!*

Robin Jensen - August 26, 2025 at 01:33 PM

PS

“ I was saddened to hear of the news of Coach Nelson, my deepest sympathy to Kay and Family. What a incredible human being. Little did we know he was a life coach for so many of his students and friends. I can remember running out of the gymnasium and finding a solace place to weep and figure a way to get home because I lost the match and was done wrestling. Mike found me and he talked, and I listened. He said it was just another life’s lesson to lose and hurt but to ultimately get past it and pick yourself up and try again. So back I went and finished the state tournament. I’ve held on to those words all my life and that’s what made Mr. Nelson special. He could constructively give you advice and motivate you to be a better person. For that I am internally grateful, and I will truly miss you Coach Nelson, may you rest in peace

Pete Salazar

Pedro Salazar - August 26, 2025 at 01:03 PM

CP

“ Mike Nelson was my son's (Chris Randall) wrestling coach all during his high school days. He was a great man that gave his all to his students. So sad to hear of his passing.💔

Cynthia Rae Peterson - August 26, 2025 at 12:41 PM

DS

“ First grade with Kay senior year with Mike! Best beginning and end to a school career! Love and condolences to Kay and family!

Danielle Sanchez - August 26, 2025 at 11:57 AM

SA

“ *Susan Arbuthnot lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson*



Susan Arbuthnot - August 26, 2025 at 11:49 AM

JM

“ *Our sincere condolences to Kay and all the family. Rest in peace Mr Nelson.
Rey & Jonnie Martinez*

Jonnie B Martinez - August 26, 2025 at 10:37 AM

TK

“ *Mr. Nelson was a wonderful person and the best teacher I know. I am sorry for your loss.*



Tracy Kinder - August 26, 2025 at 07:54 AM

DL

“ *Dakota Levine lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson*



Dakota Levine - August 26, 2025 at 03:02 AM

PC

“ I am so sorry for your loss. He was a great man who really cared for the students. He was very influential in my life. When I was 16 he told me that with my good grades I was destined to go to college. I went through a tough year and he and Mrs. Buck gave me a pep talk. They gave me great advice and helped me to graduate at mid-term and apply for scholarships. I was able to get started at NAU 6 months ahead of schedule with a scholarship in hand! Y'all are in my prayers, Penny Connell-Poston.

Penny Connell-Poston - August 26, 2025 at 01:32 AM

TA

“ I am so sorry for your loss, Kay and family. You must know that he touched so many lives of the kids he came to know, mine included. He was so loved by so many people in this town (his home). May you find comfort knowing that. Rest in peace Mr. Nelson.

Tonya Ayala - August 26, 2025 at 12:41 AM

JT

“ My sincere condolences to Kay and the rest of Mr. Nelson's family. He was an excellent coach, counselor, and teacher. A true and genuine educator. In cross country he inspired us with his handstands and life lessons. In class, on the track, or as counselor he encouraged us to push ourselves to achieve potential. Thank you Mr. Nelson. I hope there is a nice trail up there for you to stretch your legs. Downhill of course.

Jonathan Thom - August 25, 2025 at 11:51 PM

ML

“ Mike Nelson coached our two sons on the cross country team and was very influential in guiding them to be the best versions of themselves. We offer Kay and her family our condolences. Mark and Laurette LeVine

Mark LeVine - August 25, 2025 at 11:42 PM

PI

“ Death is something we all must experience but it hurts so badly. I'm so sorry Kay and kids. I've walked this path and pray for Peace that only comes from our Lord for you. Pat Riggs Inman

Patricia Riggs Inman - August 25, 2025 at 11:41 PM

RM

“ Rudy Martin lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson



Rudy Martin - August 25, 2025 at 11:36 PM

SH

“ Sending over many prayers 🙏



Susan Hayes - August 25, 2025 at 10:58 PM



“ *Mr. Nelson was especially kind to me and my brothers when our mother suddenly died in 1989. I was a freshman at WHS and not even in his class. Then, when I was a senior, he often shared his wisdom with me and was influential in shaping how I wrote. He was a force for me to continue a career in communication and writing. As an educator now, I try to be as caring and thoughtful as Mr. Nelson. May his family take solace in knowing his memory and influence will live forever in his students. Thank you for sharing him with us!*

Ryan Hansen - August 25, 2025 at 10:44 PM



“ *Michael Valenzuela lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson*



Michael Valenzuela - August 25, 2025 at 10:40 PM



“ *Erlinda Valenzuela lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson*



Erlinda Valenzuela - August 25, 2025 at 10:40 PM

KT

“ *Kathy Thatcher lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson*



Kathy Thatcher - August 25, 2025 at 10:07 PM



“ *Rest well fine Sir. Condolences to Kay, Paul, Kristin & family.*



Jennifer Regensberg - August 25, 2025 at 09:18 PM

BO

“ *this man reached out to me when I was in high school. When I thought no one cared, he did. His caring helped me through a very difficult time. I did not realize he and Kay were married a day apart from my wedding date. I remember you at my wedding, I remember Mike coaching my Kendel Hale in cross country. I remember you acknowledging the death of my daughter and the death of Billy a few months ago. You both were a blessing and an example and a very very special part of my school years. God bless you Kay and your family. I do not think we are ever ready for our spouse to die. It is so totally different than losing a child. I hope to see you soon. Prayers abound. I love you Mr. Nelson and you will be missed greatly*

bonnie - August 25, 2025 at 09:16 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Michael Alan Nelson.

August 25, 2025 at 09:13 PM



“ Lily and Rose Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of Michael Alan Nelson.



August 25, 2025 at 09:13 PM



“ Joel Todd lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson



Joel Todd - August 25, 2025 at 09:10 PM



“ Jerry Giudice lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson



Jerry Giudice - August 25, 2025 at 09:01 PM

CC

“ Our deepest sympathy to the family. Your all in our thoughts and prayers 🙏
Chad, Carol and Dylan Case



Carol Case - August 25, 2025 at 08:49 PM

KS

“ Mr Nelson came to us in 1970. Little did he know what a challenge we could be. Luckily he was up to it. He listened, guided and expected the best from each of us. I believe we made him proud. Prayers for comfort and peace for Kay and their family.
Picture..5-7-2025



Kevin Schmelzla - August 25, 2025 at 08:26 PM

PS

Love the Photo!!!

Pedro Salazar - August 26, 2025 at 01:05 PM

DL

A gentleman and a scholar ...
I believe Mike was one of the nicest people I have known in my 83 years. My heart grieves for Kay and the children ... though we have been gone many years Mike was one of the bright spots during my pause there. I believe we are rewarded for the good we do in our lives, which means he is a wealthy man. May God bless his loved ones during this difficult time.

Deacon Greg LaFreniere - August 31, 2025 at 05:53 PM

JR

“ *Janna Riggs lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson*



Janna Riggs - August 25, 2025 at 07:56 PM

SA

“ *Coach Nelson was my cross country coach for all of high school. He taught me numerous life lessons, provided a life long love for running, and overall was a great mentor and coach. My condolences to his family.*

Stephen Addington - August 25, 2025 at 07:45 PM

LG

“ *Mr. Nelson was my favorite teacher in 8th grade. He used to make us listen to Simon & Garfunkel to learn from their lyrics. I wasn't fond of them but every time I heard them after 8th grade, they put a smile on my face and brought back good memories of Mr. Nelson's 8th grade class. Rest in peace Mr. Nelson.*

Lina Gomez - August 25, 2025 at 07:38 PM

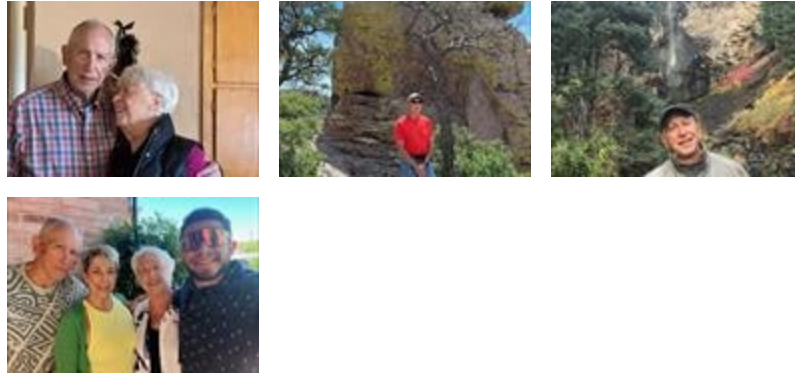
BC

“ *Mr. Nelson was an amazing human and a beloved teacher and coach to many. Willcox High was lucky to have him; and his students, even more so. He taught lessons both in the classroom, on the mat, and on the trails. Everyone was equal in his eyes and we are all better for having known him. Rest in Peace, Coach. And thank you for encouraging and believing in me when I had my doubts.*

Boyd Coleman - August 25, 2025 at 07:36 PM

WC

“ 4 files added to the tribute wall



Westlawn Chapel - August 25, 2025 at 07:19 PM



“ Crystal Scheu lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson



Crystal Scheu - August 25, 2025 at 07:14 PM

ML

“ Coach Nelson was a great man who left a lasting impact on my life. He taught me valuable lessons about character that I still carry with me today. My condolences go out to his family.

Marien van der Lelij - August 25, 2025 at 07:00 PM

GG

“ Sending heartfelt condolences to Kay and all the family.

Gary and Janice Graham - August 25, 2025 at 06:52 PM

GM

“ Gus & Rita Morales sent a virtual gift in memory of Michael Nelson



Gus & Rita Morales - August 25, 2025 at 06:46 PM

CD

“ Carol Dunagan lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson



Carol Dunagan - August 25, 2025 at 06:14 PM

BW

“ Deepest condolences to Kay and the family. Was always such a nice man. Rest in peace



Bill and Gloria Wood - August 25, 2025 at 04:53 PM



“ Betsy Ajeman lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson



Betsy Ajeman - August 25, 2025 at 04:49 PM

VD

“ *What a great loss! Mike was a very great neighbor and friend. Kay, I'm so sorry for your loss.*

Vickey Dickerson - August 25, 2025 at 04:42 PM

SH

“ *Scott & Jeannie Harris sent a virtual gift in memory of Michael Nelson*



Scott & Jeannie Harris - August 25, 2025 at 04:25 PM

DR

“ *Denise & Gary Runyon lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson*



Denise & Gary Runyon - August 25, 2025 at 04:04 PM

BI

“ *I remember going out to the Chiricahua mountains to cut wood with Mike. He was always to organized and we had a good time. Also, he allowed me to run with (behind) the cross country team when they were doing runs in the country. I'm sorry for his loss to his friends and family.*

Bill - August 25, 2025 at 02:59 PM

AT

“ *Anselmo & Bertha Torres lit a candle in memory of Michael Nelson*



Anselmo & Bertha Torres - August 25, 2025 at 02:52 PM