

Jack Neal, a longtime Reno arts critic and a respected high school government teacher, died Friday 02/26/2010.

He was 77.

Neal was the community's art critic and "the voice for classical music," said Scott Faulkner, executive director of the Reno Chamber Orchestra.

"He was an important part of the musical landscape here for many years," Faulkner said. "He was a very interesting and fun person to be around, and he definitely will be missed. And I have heard from many of his former students who said he was a great teacher."

Neal was a government teacher and debate coach at Reno High School for decades, and he also taught at Bishop Manogue High School. Most recently, he had been a political science instructor at Truckee Meadows Community College.

Former Reno City Council member Tony Harsh said Neal had been the government teacher of her now-grown children when they were students at Reno High.

"I can't tell you how much this man meant to my family," Harsh said. "He taught all four of my children what it meant to be citizens. He was so much more than an art critic or a music critic. I am just in shock. He was such a wonderful man."

Neal studied symphony and opera conducting with Stanley Chapple and baton technique with Walter Welke at the University of Washington in Seattle.

A music, dance and theater critic for more than 30 years, Neal also had conducted musicals, operas and symphonies.

For many years, he was the art critic for the Reno Gazette-Journal and his reviews also appeared in Opera News, the official publication of New York's Metropolitan Opera.

Neal also had been the performing arts critic for KUNR-FM, Reno's public radio station.

Information about services is pending.