



Gary Lee Zastrow

Born June 15 1946 | Died January 15, 2023

Gary lived the life of an adventurer often without ever leaving his hometown. He loved the act of discovery. He was always willing to take risks—and always was following a new dream. He turned his dreams into adventures and experiences, many with stories that will surely outlive him. He was a builder and salesman by profession, but a champion of the human spirit by default. He was a positive person who always sought ways to solve problems and find the “good” in any situation. He truly had the patience of a saint and the soul of an angel.

It is with great sadness, that Nan announces the death of her husband, Gary. (The best thing that ever happened to me in my life!). As a husband and father, he was more than just present. Through Gary's married life, he and his wife, Nan (Nancy), rode the adventures of their dreams together. Along the way there were ups and downs, tragedies and triumphs—all a part of the human experience. They were married June 17, 1967, in Wausau. Their first child, Jalane, was born in 1970 with special needs. A son, Chad, was born in 1971—and unknowingly created an even greater chapter of experiences that shaped the person Gary became.

Gary served his country as a veteran of the Army National Guards with the 632nd division. During his seven-year enlistment, he was called up for the riots on the Madison campus often facing his fellow schoolmates. Gary began his career in construction when he worked for Schuette Builders Companies in the 1970's. His job took him from Newnan, Georgia where a new factory was built and to Alaska where modular hotel units were being constructed. Home construction was in his blood since his childhood, when he learned the carpenter craft from his father. This foundation gave him the urge to build “spec” homes in the Wausau area from the 1990's to 2009. Many he lived in and then he would sell and build another. In a piece of raw wood, he saw the beauty of the grain. In a plot of vacant land, he saw nature wrapped around his sanctuary. And, in the design of a home, he visualized a place he loved to go home to.

Following his early dreams Gary decided to buy a hobby farm. His father, the late Herbert Zastrow, became his friend and partner in the hobby business that evolved from raising polled Herfords to a full herd of dairy cows. In the late 1980's he gave up his hobby of 17 years, due to the struggling farming industry and high interest rates that forced the “little” guys to fold. In addition to his hobby farming, he worked full-time. The housing market also was in trouble and his career took him to brighter beginnings as an outside commercial salesman for Crescent Electric for the next 16 years.

Gary's entrepreneurship was varied. He was a Building Inspector for the Town of Stettin from the late 1970s through the 1980s. At one point, he purchased flavored popcorn vending machines, to place around the Wausau area; but the company went bankrupt before they were ever delivered. And, of course, his love of construction in the 1990's, took him through the adventure of building spec homes until the market crashed in 2009.

But the most notable change in careers was his midlife career change to become a real estate agent in 2001. When others his age were talking retirement, Gary started a whole new career in helping other people follow their dreams. As a realtor for Coldwell Banker Action, Schofield, he created a following of people who sought the vision he had more than once through the years—home ownership.

In 1993, Chad Zastrow, the son of Gary and Nan died at the age of 21 as a result of suicide. It was a devastating blow that turned Gary and Nan's life into a new mission. Together, they founded Wings—a Grief Education Ministry—that became their vision of hope for the bereaved. Beginning in 1993, Gary and Nan served the community with workshops, presentations, support groups, and HOPE. This was the greatest legacy they could give to the community in honor of their son.

Everyone who knew Gary seemed to radiate to him. Words to describe his character would be: undeniably patience, common-sense wise, problem-solver, honest to the core, trustworthy, great sense of humor, loyal-loving husband, compassionate, mind-your-own business, and a loyal friend. Raised with a strong German/Polish heritage, work ethics were strong, and retirement didn't seem to be an option. Always ready to learn something new, in 2018 Gary volunteered to continue his education about mediation and become a volunteer mediator for Judicare.

Gary was an only child, the son of Herbert and Lucille Zastrow, Town of Stettin. He was preceded in death by his son, Chad E. Zastrow. He is survived by: by his wife, Nancy; daughter Jalane. Nan's sister, Sally Johnson (Clarence/Ole) Wausau, and brother, Tom Bentz (Karen), Venice FL. Also, by a loved niece, Jennifer Johnson-Mroczenski (Glenn), Paige Sedlar and Dustin Sedlar.

He will be missed beyond words by his wife of 55 years, Nan Zastrow. She described him as her rock and like her son, Chad, who inspired their life, Gary was the “wind beneath her wings.” He encouraged her dreams of making their non-profit visible and reachable for anyone who needed it. They were both professional volunteers who served from the heart to help others. In the many years of working and companioning the bereaved, Nan always admitted that losing a lifetime, loving spouse is the greatest loss of all. Nan acknowledges that Gary's influence on her life will continue as his spirit will be with her always. Love never dies!



Death Is Nothing At All

By Henry Scott-Holland

Death is nothing at all.

It does not count.

I have only slipped away into the next room.

Nothing has happened.

Everything remains exactly as it was.

I am I, and you are you,

and the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged.

Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.

Call me by the old familiar name.

Speak of me in the easy way which you always used.

Put no difference into your tone.

Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together.

Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.

Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.

Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it.

Life means all that it ever meant.

It is the same as it ever was.

There is absolute and unbroken continuity.

What is this death but a negligible accident?

Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?

I am but waiting for you, for an interval,

somewhere very near,

just round the corner.

All is well.

Nothing is hurt; nothing is lost.

One brief moment and all will be as it was before.

How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again!