

Gabe A. Dalmath

1946 - 2006

I Am a Happy Man...

Gabe was a man of enormous talent who could light up a room with his smile, trademark humor and natural warmth – but what his family and friends treasured about him was his amazing ability to quietly and consistently put other people first. “Don’t worry, I’ll take care of it,” he always said. *And he would.*



He was the epitome of strength - tough, reliable, loyal, courageous, dependable and conscientious. He had the patience and perseverance to tackle the most challenging tasks. He could pack more activities into a day than most could in a week. He was the consummate communicator, always staying in touch with people by phone and email and often with an endearing “Hey Kiddo.”

To his long-time colleagues at WHEC-TV (10NBC), where he anchored the 6 and 11 p.m. newscasts longer than anyone in the station’s history, and also served as producer, news manager and morning show anchor, he is remembered for being more than a consummate professional who always gave his best.

To them he was a colleague who was passionate about giving back.

In serving for 23 years as host of the annual Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon, longer than any other host in the nation, he raised millions to help children and adults coping with muscular dystrophy. But his devotion to their families went well beyond the yearly



telecast. He became a compassionate advocate and strong voice for them, attended MD summer camp, and never missed the funerals of those he knew who lost their battles with the terrible disease.

And just two days shy of retirement, remembers colleague Rebecca LeClair, he was still giving back. During that week in December 2004 an earthquake in the Indian Ocean had triggered a series of tsunamis that devastated coastal communities in Asia, and the station was holding a telethon to benefit disaster

victims. On the Thursday before his Friday retirement he worked a double shift – covering the 5:30 a.m. morning show and the 6 p.m. newscast – then volunteered to stay late into the evening hosting the tsunami telecast, before grabbing a few hours sleep and heading back the next day to work a final double shift. Gabe, she says, had an “unprecedented work ethic” he didn’t have to work the telecast. “It came from his heart.”

Being willing to give of his time to others was something Gabe didn’t confine to work hours. He was everywhere in Rochester – delivering commencement speeches, hosting events, giving a tremendous amount of his time to assist Junior Achievement and serving as the community spokesperson for the local multiple sclerosis chapter. But one story related this week describes a side of Gabe that not everyone knew.

Having escaped his native Hungary at the age of 10 during the 1956 revolution there, and crossed with his parents into Austria just a week before the border was sealed off, and as a naturalized U.S. citizen and veteran of the U.S. Army, Gabe knew freedom was not free.



Quietly, 10 years ago, remembers his friend Barry Culhane, Gabe had approached him prior to the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Highland Park offering to help. “On the day of the dedication, Gabe arrived dressed in his dress uniform from the Army. He volunteered to escort Gold Mothers (a

longtime tradition of honoring mothers who lost one or more sons to war) to the appropriate place in the Memorial near the post marking their sons or relatives. In typical fashion, Gabe was respectful, courteous and very kind to each person. He wanted no fanfare, but he certainly added a touch of class for those precious family members.”

For all of his giving to the community, everyone who knew Gabe realized that for him family always came first.

He was devoted to his daughter Amanda - reading to her every night before bed, taking pride in teaching her skiing, skating, swimming, horseback riding, tennis, golf, and rollerblading. No matter what the issue - school, hard decisions, money, or friends - he was always there for her to help and provide guidance. Gabe was also there for every play, performance, musical, game and recital. He loved her cooking and was so happy to see her find joy in the things she loved. He was so proud of her success and accomplishments. And he always stressed to her that your health is the most important thing.

He would envelop family members in doing something with him outdoors. He was a natural athlete, who excelled at everything from windsurfing to skiing.

“Some of my fondest memories of Gabe are of playing golf together, recalled brother-in-law Fred. Golf started out as a form of therapy. He picked up the game playing left handed to compensate for a back problem. But Gabe's competitiveness would not allow him to **not** master golf. Gabe wouldn't accept that playing golf left handed, with less than a full set of clubs, on some of the toughest courses in Rochester were excuses for less than competitive play, and he was not shy about using his clubs to demonstrate his

occasional frustration. It did not come as any surprise to me, therefore, that one beautiful Saturday afternoon on the front nine of Greystone the head of his 3 wood went further and straighter than the ball he had just struck. Gabe just said HE did **not** need a 3 wood to play that course that day and carried on.

“As we got older, Gabe and I didn't play as frequently, but when we did play, often we would place a small wager on the outcome, just to make it a bit more sporting. And that's when the brother and competitor came into full conflict. You see, as proud as he was of his advancements as a golfer, and as much as he wanted to show me how much he had improved, and beat me, whenever I would best him on a shot or hole, he was genuinely more pleased for me than upset with himself. His appreciation for my



accomplishments overwhelmed his competitive spirit.”

Appreciation for others was readily apparent in his deep love for his wife, Jean, their daughter, Amanda, his mother, Kate, his mother-in-law, Marie, sister-in-law Sharon and niece and nephew Lauren and Evan. He was tremendously proud of Jean's entrepreneurial skills as president of their jointly-owned firm, and marveled at the young woman his daughter had become. Daily he checked in with his mother, Kate, to make sure she had

everything she needed, Whenever Marie needed something, Gabe used to say to her, "relax, I'll take care of it." which speaks volumes about how he felt about his family.

In the weeks leading up to his death he battled cancer courageously, privately, and with great perseverance, enduring difficult treatments and coping with setbacks. He never lost his will to live. Despite great suffering on September 1, the night before their 28th wedding anniversary, he told Jean those weeks with his family had been the happiest of his life. “I am,” he told her, “a happy man.”

By Vicki Brown

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