



Marsha Malee Kulick

October 2, 2023

Eulogy of Marsha Kulick by Dr. Aaron Kulick

Marsha M. Kulick, of Murrysville, PA, unexpectedly passed away in her home on October 2, 2023, at the age of 78. She was born on December 3, 1944, and raised in a loving multigenerational Irish household in the coal mining and steel town of Cassandra, PA. She lived with her grandparents, Chester and Helen, and her great-grandmother, Bridget. Marsha was placed at the center of their universe, and with their support, she flourished. At just a few years of age, Marsha began reading, became deeply inquisitive, and went on to become just about the most well-read person the world would know.

Also, at a young age, Marsha competed with the boys at the local playground and typically won. She would later turn this energy reservoir into dance. Her grandparents discovered that the Gene Kelly School of Dance was just 20 miles from their home in Johnstown, PA, and was quickly enrolled. In fact, when it opened, Gene Kelly himself passed out flyers to attract new students. Marsha quickly excelled and later devoted her career to Ballet. Marsha later danced and taught Ballet in the NYC area. Some 30 years later, she would open her own school in Murrysville, PA. Growing up, the boys would always see the Nutcracker during Christmas time and hope to never hear the music of the Sugar Plum Fairly again.

Now, rewinding a bit, it is impossible to talk about Marsha's life without also talking about her soul mate, Gary Kulick. As luck would have it, they were both born in the tiny town of Cassandra, PA. Gary and Marsha lived just down the street from each other, but I guess pretty much everybody lived down the street there. They would play together often, and their dynamics were established earlier. Gary was quick to suggest what the neighborhood kids should do, but Marsha would remind him that he was two weeks younger and that she always knew better. To make matters worse, her grandparents would ask Gary to babysit Marsha because they felt he was more mature and responsible. This, of course, would drive Marsha crazy, and she would have none of it. Still, her family always felt reassured when Gary was around. Right from the start, Gary was good-natured, trustworthy, and responsible. I have a theory that everyone is born at a certain age and remains at that age for the rest of their life. My Mom had a youthful exuberance throughout her entire life, and while her death was nearly eight decades later, she was to die at just 16 years old. Our father, on the other hand, entered life at 47 years old and unfortunately exited way too early but at that same very age. He was born mature, always did the right thing, and became a natural leader almost entirely through example. Right from the start, he had a gravitas that commanded a room. He always knew what to do and what was right. I have always felt that people and societies should be judged by how we care for the "least among us." That lesson, I learned from my father.

It was not hard to see why my mother was drawn to my father from the start. He excelled at just about everything he did. He was the first of his family to go college, aided by a full scholarship in Football and Wrestling at Western Maryland University. He started in both sports his first year and would go on to win his heavyweight championship in his 17 school division. After graduation, Gary and Marsha married, and the Kulicks quickly became a family with the birth of my brother and myself while living in Baltimore in the late 1960s.

Of course, that was also a time of war, and my father was sent overseas to fulfill his ROTC commitment. He never talked about this time, and so it never really became part of my consciousness until the spring of 1987. At that time, I was accepted to the Naval Academy of Annapolis. I was very proud to have been recruited both academically and athletically. The choice was not taken lightly, and I thought he would be excited about my decision. Of course, my father was the embodiment of restraint, so when he started screaming in disapproval, I was pushed into uncharted territory. It wasn't until many years later that I understood his protective response.

Fortunately, he came back safely to our family in Baltimore, and he then went on to get his MBA at Loyola University of Maryland. Afterward, he was offered the opportunity to take his leadership skills to NYC and eventually ended up at the Strober Brothers construction supply company in Brooklyn, New York. Of course, my mother was thrilled to go to a more vibrant city with more opportunities to dance and to experience the dance culture. So, with that, we went up to the Jersey suburbs of New York, just a few miles from the Jersey Shore. Unbeknownst to the Kulick's, the family would go on to live out the happiest two decades of their lives, though the ride was a bit rough at times.

While heading the business as president, my father took Strober Public, and the capital was invested in its growth. Strober Brothers would later earn hundreds of millions of dollars in sales annually. Then, in January of 1988, the ride became much rougher after the death of Rick Strober. On the afternoon of January 26, 1988, Rick met with his lawyer in a midtown Manhattan office building. He left to use the men's room and minutes later was found dead in the courtyard 22 floors below. Rick had the largest keyman life insurance policy in history at that time, totaling over \$40 million. It was never determined if it was a murder or a suicide, but eventually, Rick's life insurance company did settle. Gary became the CEO and chairman of the Board, but those were

difficult years for my father.

Ultimately, Gary grew tired, and the family looked to the Pittsburgh region to find a furniture company with 2 of my uncles, which later would be called the Office Pavilion. This was an opportunity to move to a slightly slower pace of life and to be with extended family. My parents planned to live out the rest of their lives here in the Murrysville area. Gary was now proud of what he had accomplished and spared no expense to build my Mother the home of her dreams, upon the highest point in Murrysville and just a few miles away from the rest of our extended family.

Unfortunately, this story was to become a classic love story where triumph would then turn to tragedy. My father was just 47 years old when we planned to have just an ordinary day at the Gym. Later on, however, I called to let him know that I wasn't able to make it. He went alone and had a cardiac arrest while jogging on the treadmill. He had just received a clean bill of health from a Forbes hospital cardiologist a month earlier. Before medical school and automatic defibrillators, I was grateful I was not there.

My brother and I delayed life a bit to help smooth things out and provide support, but our Mom continued to struggle for many years after the death of her soul mate. It all just seemed and continues to remain non-sensical. Over more than three decades later, Marsha would stay in that home that my father had built, at considerable expense and, of course, against the recommendations of her sons. To leave that home meant she would be leaving my father behind.

Marsha did, however, go on to enrich the lives of the many who were fortunate enough to meet her. Marsha became the founder and artistic director of her own ballet school, the Ballet Westmoreland Academy, for many years. She kept close ties with the Pittsburgh Ballet Company and became a close friend

of its founder, Nicolas Petrov, an internationally acclaimed dancer and choreographer. Marsha mentored and trained many dancers who went on to further their professional dance careers.

Marsha is survived by her two sons, Erik Kulick (Lisa Anantarow) and Aaron Kulick (Czarina Kulick), and her partner, Will Gaines. She will be forever known as "G-Ma" to her grandchildren Alejandro, Isa, and Esme, whom she loved very much. She was also survived by her sister, Brigid Stegena (Michael Stegena), and many nieces and nephews. We are here with family and friends to help celebrate her life with a toast and cake on what would have been her 79th birthday. Marsha has always believed in "the more, the merrier."

Marsha was a dedicated educator, an avid reader, and a strong advocate for the arts. She believed in the power of supporting youth and activism as vital aspects of preserving democracy. Marsha's passion for education led her to support the Kentucky Avenue School. <https://givebutter.com/3rS6Bw>

Marsha will be deeply missed by her loved ones and the community she touched throughout her life.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

DEC 3. 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM (ET)

Mullaney's Harp and Fiddle
2329 Penn Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Tribute Wall

JB

“Wow , I had no clue Marsha passed away until now. I've been out of the loop for a few years busy with family issues of my own. I was Marshas favorite Carpet Cleaner . I worked for her for about 20 years until I dissolved my business. She was the only client of mine that I memorized her phone number. More like a friend than a customer. What a dear heart . Lots of great stories. Marsha will always be remembered. John Blinkhorn

John Blinkhorn - May 12, 2025 at 01:17 PM