

MARSHA MALEE 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. Her grandparents, Chester and Helen, and her great-grandmother, Bridget, were ever present and devoted to making Marsha feel safe. At just a few years

of age, she began to read and had a lifelong thirst for knowledge. Growing up, Marsha competed with the boys at the local playground and later turned this energy reservoir into dance. Her grandparents discovered the Gene Kelly School of Dance just 20 miles from their home in Johnstown, PA. In fact, when it opened, Gene Kelly himself passed out flyers to attract new students. To nurture this interest further, her family quickly enrolled Marsha, where she would excel and devote her career to dance. Marsha would later dance and teach Ballet in the NYC area. Some 30 years later, she would open her own school in Murrysville, PA. 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. 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, Marsha's 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. Gary was good-natured, trustworthy, and responsible.

Marsha was drawn to Gary right from the start. He excelled at Football and Wrestling and was the first in his family to go to college after being awarded a full scholarship to 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, they married and had two boys (Aaron and Erik) while living in Baltimore. It was also a time of war, and Gary was conscripted overseas as a tank commander.

Meanwhile, Marsha was left in charge and took care of the household while he was away. Fortunately, Gary came back safely to his family in Baltimore and went on to get his MBA at Loyola University of Maryland. Afterward, he was offered the opportunity to take his leadership skills to the Strober Brothers construction supply company in Brooklyn, New York. Of course, Marsha was thrilled to go to a vibrant city with more opportunities to dance and to experience the dance culture. So, with that, the family went up to the Jersey suburbs of New York, just a few miles from the Jersey Shore. Unbeknownst to the Kulicks, the family would go on to live out the happiest two decades of their lives together.

While heading the business as president, Gary took Strober public, and the company netted \$11 million in revenue, which 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 pay. Gary became the CEO and chairman of the Board, but the following several years were difficult. Ultimately, Gary grew tired, and the family looked to the Pittsburgh region to find a furniture company with his brother and brother-in-law. This was an opportunity to move to a slightly slower pace of life and be with extended family. Marsha and Gary had planned to live out the rest of their lives here. Unfortunately, though, Gary died unexpectedly just a few months later after having a cardiac arrest while running on a gym treadmill. He had just received a clean bill of health from a Forbes hospital cardiologist a month earlier. Marsha never fully recovered and struggled for many years after the death of her soul mate, Gary. Even more than three decades later, Marsha refused to leave the home he built for her despite it being several orders of magnitude larger than her needs. She did, however, go on to significantly impact the lives of the many who were fortunate enough to meet her.

Marsha was 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.

She is survived by her two sons, Erik Kulick (Lisa Anantarow) and Aaron Kulick (Czarina Kulick). 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 partner, William Gaines; her sister Brigid Stegena (Michael Stegena); and many nieces and nephews. Family and friends are welcome to help celebrate her life with a toast and cake on what would have been her 79th birthday, Sunday, December 3, 12:30-3:30 pm at Mullaney's Harp and Fiddle, 2329 Penn Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15222, 12:30-3:30 pm. Marsha 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. Her passion for reading and education led her to support Kentucky Avenue School. In honor of Marsha's memory, her family kindly requests that instead of sending flowers, donations be made to the Kentucky Avenue School. Contributions can be made online at <https://givebutter.com/3rS6Bw>. Marsha will be deeply missed by her loved ones and the community she touched throughout her life.

You can find the full eulogy written by her son:

<https://1drv.ms/w/s!Ap0pN-RsI5ay3x5h2UlqmijFgodl?e=8mFM3z>

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