



Dennis A. Gaustad

June 16, 1945 - May 14, 2015

Dennis A. Gaustad, 69, of Sunny Valley, Oregon, and formerly of Spring Grove, Minnesota, died May 14, 2015, after a year-long battle with a very rare, highly aggressive cancer, called Anaplastic Thyroid Carcinoma. When diagnosed he was told he had only weeks to live. Dennis survived many months instead, defying the statistics. His legacy is one of courage and determination in the face of his illness.

He was born June 16, 1945, to Arnold and Irene (Skauge) Gaustad of Spring Grove, Minnesota, and was baptized and confirmed at Faith Lutheran Church in Black Hammer. He grew up on the family farm in Black Hammer, and attended country school there with his sisters and brother. His youth was spent working on the farm, playing softball, fishing, hiking, and deer hunting, including with a bow and arrow. He graduated from Spring Grove High School in 1963, after which he joined the Army Reserves. Later he was engaged in farming. He was an excellent carpenter and worked as a contractor with his father and brother, building several houses in LaCrescent and LaCrosse, Wisconsin. He continued his education in California, where he attended the College of San Mateo for two years. Dennis had an unwavering dedication to a healthy lifestyle. He was an avid runner, trained in karate, judo, and bodybuilding, with a lifelong focus on healthy eating.

Dennis owned and operated the Lion's Den in Spring Grove from 1976 to

1992, which he purchased from his brother Arnie. He proudly sponsored a softball team which won several championships. His patrons also enjoyed pool and foosball tournaments, for which they won many trophies. He moved to Sunny Valley, Oregon, in 1992, where he was co-creator of the Applegate Trail Interpretive Center, along with his sister, Betty, and his niece, Jacque, constructing the building and the innovative displays, and guiding tours through the historic museum. He provided information and education to anyone who wished to learn the area's history.

Dennis is survived by four sisters, Betty Gaustad of Sunny Valley, Oregon, Barbara Price of Menlo Park, California, Bonnie Myhre of Fountain Hills, Arizona, Linda Gaustad of Issaquah, Washington, and one brother, Arnie Gaustad of LaCrescent, Minnesota. He is also survived by his nieces and nephews, Jacquelana VanDeWalker, Danica Myhre, Logan Price, Nathan Gaustad, and Tiffany Gaustad, and one adorable grandniece, Chloe VanDeWalker. He is preceded in death by his parents, Arnold Gaustad and Irene Gaustad, and a sister, Angeline Gaustad.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations in his name to the International Thyroid Oncology Group, at www.ITOG.org/donation or by mail at Treasurer, ITOG, P.O. Box 270, Yorkville, NY 13495.

Even though he is gone from us, Dennis will live forever in our hearts, thoughts, and lives. We will love and miss him always.

Cemetery Details

Faith Lutheran Church

Black Hammer, MN 55974

Previous Events

Service

JUN 6. 1:00 PM (CT)

Faith Lutheran Church
Black Hammer, MN

Tribute Wall

JV

“ I have told a number of people I care about that I once knew an authentic man.

And, Dennis is the only authentic man I've ever known. By that I mean, pure.

He would have been a monk in a former time. I was inspired to be a better person by knowing him.

We never know who will effect the course of our life. Sometimes it's the quiet experiences that show us the way.

Dennis did that for me and I think in some way I did that for him. I will never forget him.

Tommy Griffen

(Dennis and Tommy worked together, along with Dennis's sister Betty, and niece Jacque, to create the Applegate Trail Interpretive Center, in Sunny Valley, Oregon)

Jacque VanDeWalker - June 18, 2015 at 09:12 PM

KS

“ I grew up hanging out at The Lions Den playing pool and foosball. Memories of Dennis often come with a smile. At The Rolling Stones concert in Minneapolis on June 3 we reminisced about Dennis and the fact that every time we requested The Stones, he played them real loud. We talked with Dennis about everything from Altamont, Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison, to tolerance and acceptance. He was forgiving and thankful when we returned two bags full of his staple frosted mugs that ended up at our house after closing time. He was a unique, kind, intelligent man with a kind spirit. Rock on Dennis! When I listen to loud Rock, I'll raise my glass in your honor.
Kathryn Steiner (Johnston)

Kathryn Steiner - June 13, 2015 at 05:31 PM

BD

“ Dennis was an incredibly unique individual, memorable for his endless kindness, patience, and inner strength. We have many fond memories of the Lion's Den and the many hours of playing Pool and Ms Pacman. Sympathies to family and friends.

Bob and Dionne - June 06, 2015 at 05:40 PM

DS

“ *"To live in hearts we leave behind, is not to die". I remember....*
Dionne

Dionne Schoh - June 06, 2015 at 12:59 PM

JV

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Jacquie VanDeWalker - June 05, 2015 at 05:01 PM

LK

“ *My condolences to the family. I met Dennis back in the 70s. My friends and i would come into town from LaCrosse and our first stop was always the Lions Den. I have thought of him often through the years and wondered where he went after closing the Den. I'm so glad he led such an interesting life. Everyone thought alot about him, He will be missed.I'm so sorry for your loss. Linda Kleinschmidt I*

linda kleinschmidt - June 04, 2015 at 07:54 PM

LG

“ *I couldn't be more proud of my brother than I was when I would go down to Oregon and watch him entertain the tourists and schoolchildren at the Applegate Trail Interpretive Center with tales of the Oregon Trail. And I have never and probably will never see anybody handle such an aggressive type of cancer as anaplastic thyroid cancer with more grace and dignity than he did. He is an example of the kind of strength of character we all would like to emulate.*

Linda

Linda Gaustad - June 02, 2015 at 10:41 AM

 Junior
Klegseth

“ *Condolences to the family and friends of Dennis. I was fortunate to get to know Dennis very well, as did most people who lived in Spring Grove during the years he owned the Lion's Den. I can't count the many nights we chatted or played pool and foosball (he was a master of both). I still can't cut a pizza without seeing him doing it, from oven to bar to sliced as if in one smooth movement (I had lots of practice watching this). I especially admired his Zen-like disposition, calm and respectful even in difficult circumstances.*

Junior Klegseth - May 30, 2015 at 08:16 PM

LP

“ *I fondly remember my uncle Dennis teaching me techniques and trick shots on the pool table at the ranch. He always loved to share his knowledge and skills. He taught me many things, and he lives on in my memories. I'll always think of him, and what he taught me, when I play pool or lift weights. -Logan*

Logan Price - May 29, 2015 at 09:17 PM

BP

“ *My brother, Dennis will hold a place in my memory as long as I live. We grew up together on a farm in Black Hammer, sharing all kinds of adventures, along with the hard work. Dennis taught me every 'boy' thing I know, like softball, shooting a bow and arrow, and deer hunting. (He couldn't teach me to bait a hook though. I just wouldn't do it.)*

Barbara

Barbara Price - May 29, 2015 at 09:11 PM