



Gaetano A. DeMattei

February 9, 1929 - September 26, 2023

Gaetano A. DeMattei

In the early morning hours of September 26, 2023, Gaetano A. DeMattei passed away. At 94 years of age, his body couldn't keep up with his mind's desire to continue the voyage of life. Gate was born in San Francisco on February 9, 1929. Gate, the "golden child" according to his sister, Joan Thompson, was the perfect combination of his energetic, entrepreneurial mother, Rose, and his inventive, mechanically gifted father, Tony.

Gate's thirst for adventure was evident even as a young boy of 10 when he navigated the San Francisco bus system to reach the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition. His zest for life was undiminished until the end; skiing 'most' difficult runs this past winter and biking through the valley in July. During his final weeks, he said we should prepare for a party, and so all eight of his children gathered and reflected his love back onto him. As we read aloud the words penned seven decades ago, in letters to the love of his life, Gayle Girard, we were reminded of his passion for life's adventures and his wife. For Gate, every day was an opportunity to learn, explore, and experience something new.

Professionally, Gate's inclination towards medicine was foreshadowed during childhood days beneath cars in his father's auto shop. Imagining engine parts

as human organs, he transitioned from pistons to hearts becoming a renowned surgeon. His medical journey took him from Santa Clara University to Georgetown University Medical School. It was there that he first encountered Gayle, radiant in a vibrant red cashmere sweater. Their second encounter occurred in an operating theater during a surgical rotation. Gate strategically scheduled his visits to the OR on the days when Gayle, a scrub nurse, was working.

After graduating from medical school in 1954, he convinced Gayle to leave her parents and sisters in Virginia and follow him to Sacramento where he completed his internship. In 1955, Gate joined the Air Force to complete his two years of service. While finishing his basic training in the summer of 1955, he decided it was time to propose to Gayle. On September 3, 1955, Gate and Gayle were married in a small wedding ceremony at Randolph AFB in San Antonio, Texas. The options for Air Force service included international destinations which appealed to Gate, but there was the possibility that his new wife would not be able to join him overseas. Fortunately, the newlyweds were sent to Honolulu, Hawaii. As an adventurer and flight surgeon, Gate took advantage of every opportunity presented. He flew to Japan, Thailand, and India. Collected exotic artifacts from these distant lands and even learned the art of furniture craftsmanship.

In 1957, he returned with Gayle and baby Tony to San Francisco where he completed his surgical residency and welcomed three more sons – Gaetano (G), Chris, and Peter, into their growing family. Residency complete, Gate, Gayle and the four boys relocated to Yuba City where Gate started his surgical practice and Gayle juggled front office and nursing duties. His medical practice thrived and two daughters – Siena and Marina – joined the ranks. Not one to sit idle, Gate decided to fulfill a lifelong dream of owning a cattle ranch. In 1964, Gate and Gayle drove their family to the ranch in Browns Valley, bought 50 head of cattle, a few horses, and a tractor. The ranch, lovingly

named Monte Verde, became a hub for unforgettable family gatherings, where Gate and Gayle added a swimming pool, tennis court, and two more daughters, Tanya and Mia, to their vibrant family.

Gate and Gayle first discovered Olympic Valley when they volunteered as a medic and nurse at the 1960 Winter Olympics. During their years on the ranch, the couple would gather all 8 kids and head to Olympic Valley for some ski time. If you were up and ready to ski at 7:30 am – you could join Gate. Back at the cabin at lunchtime, Gate served up his famous fried bologna sandwiches. As Christmas approached, Gate and Gayle would routinely fill their orange VW van with kids, ski gear, and 1970's video equipment for epic powder ski trips to Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Christmas Eve was dedicated to extended family - the Thompsons and Grandma Rose – marked by midnight mass and opening presents. But, Christmas morning was a sacred time reserved for skiing. By 1977, Gate's passion for skiing surpassed his rancher aspirations. Thus, he and Gayle sold the ranch and settled in Olympic Valley. While Gate maintained his medical practice in Yuba City, he divided his time between Yuba City-Marysville and Olympic Valley.

Upon retiring from medicine, Gate began his second career as a Master's ski racer. He and Gayle crisscrossed the western states and traveled to Europe and Canada so Gate could compete. He loved the Master's race community and the joy of victory. Over the past 28 years, Gate dominated his racing class, winning pretty much every race he entered. He was always trying to improve his technique and speed, with the goal of being faster than the younger racers, even at age 93. A fierce competitor, he would say he lost if he didn't come in first place, no matter how many competitors. During the off season, when he was not training at Copper Mountain or in Chile, Gate helped his children with their projects. He built decks, laid pavers, remodeled bathrooms and helped build houses. Additional adventures included trips to

Alaska, Hawaii, Bali, Georgetown, and the Grand Canyon. He was active until the very end of his life.

Gate often proclaimed Olympic Valley and Lake Tahoe as the most beautiful places on Earth, surpassing even the picturesque locales he visited in Europe, Canada and South America. He cherished his home on Christy Lane, overlooking the mountain he loved to ski, and it was his final wish to remain there until the end.

Gate will be remembered by many as the modest surgeon who made house calls at any hour, the man with a deep appreciation for all things Italian, the oldest racer at the Master's Nationals, and the exuberant dancer. Above all, we will remember Gate as a loving father, devoted husband, and a man with an insatiable appetite for life. Gate is survived by his sister, Joan, eight children, nineteen grandchildren, and eleven great grandchildren.

Here's to Gate, whose spirit will forever ski the slopes of our memories and our hearts.

In celebration of Gate's remarkable life, we invite you to join us in honoring his memory and the indelible mark he left on each of our lives. Funeral services will be held at Corpus Christy Church on October 12, 2023, beginning at 11:00 am followed by a reception at Bar One, Palisades Tahoe, 2 pm to 6 pm.

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 12. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (PT)

Corpus Christi Catholic Church
905 W Lake Blvd
Tahoe City, CA 96145
(530) 583-4409

Rosary

OCT 12. 11:00 AM (PT)

Corpus Christi Catholic Church
905 W Lake Blvd
Tahoe City, CA 96145

Mass of Christian Burial

OCT 12. 11:30 AM (PT)

Corpus Christi Catholic Church
905 W Lake Blvd
Tahoe City, CA 96145

Reception

OCT 12. 2:00 PM - 6:00 PM (PT)

Bar One, Palisades Tahoe
1990 Olympic Valley Rd
Olympic Valley, CA

Tribute Wall

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“ My condolences to Gate’s family and friends. I knew Gate through my husband Matt. Gate was a kind man and we’ll miss seeing him. When my husband Matt worked at the Olympic Valley post office Gate would bring his Schnauzer puppy Penny (Penelope) with him to pick up his mail. For 5 years Matt would give Penny treats and talk to her and Gate becoming good friends. When Gate could no longer care for Penny in June 2015, he offered her to Matt. He brought Penny home 8 years ago and she is the joy of our lives. She’s almost 14 now. Through the years Gate and his daughter Diana would ask Matt how Penny was and they said they often missed her and thought about her but knew she’s with a good family. I will forever be grateful to Gate and his late wife Gayle and their daughter Diana who cared for “Princess Penelope”, Penny giving us our very precious gift. May God bless Gate as I believe he is in a serene, gorgeous place we can’t even imagine and being greeted by those who loved him very much who left before him. Many blessings to those who will miss Gate’s friendship. May he rest in eternal peace.

Carol Orey - October 07, 2023 at 10:18 AM