

Roland Gosselin

(1945 – 2019)

This is a tribute to my father, Roland Gosselin, who now lives in our hearts. He passed away peacefully one year ago (August 6th).

Dad's trademark was his unabashed charisma. He was forever at ease talking to others of all ages and walks of life, and welcomed them into our home. He was often heard saying "I have lots of beds with silk lining and pillows and if the summer sun gets too bright, you can close the lid", referring to his in-home funeral business.

He was raised by his granny with humble means and went to an all-boys military Catholic school. As a 19 year-old lifeguard he saved the life of a patron and was recognized by the Ottawa commissioner.

He was predeceased (2012) by the love of his life and wife of 44 years, Lena. Mom was the centre of Dad's universe. Their love story began when Dad was a sixteen year-old lifeguard. While giving her younger brother swimming lessons, he spotted her in her red coat and mustered the courage to ask her to go for a Coke. They fell in love, melded their cultures (Ukrainian & French) on the dance floor, and did the rock n' roll circuit around town.

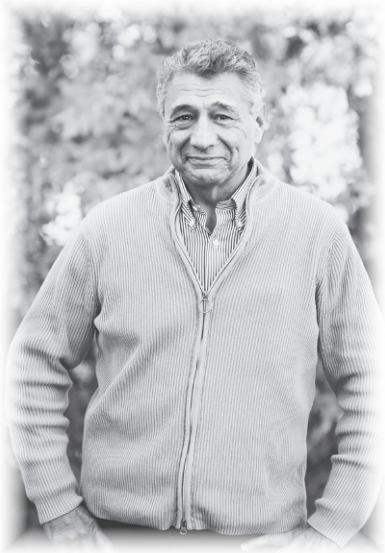
Soon after marrying they left Ottawa on a plane headed to Inuvik, mom in a white dress, white pill hat and matching heels. Dad's teaching years were eye opening for a young man and at times heart-breaking. He cared deeply for his students and had a profound respect for northern culture watching, learning and absorbing the northern way of life.

He fondly recalled the humour and support of his co-workers during his 35 years of service with the Government of NWT. He was passionate about doing his part to make the Yellowknife community even stronger. This included bringing life to the Terry Fox run, Canada Fit week, the coaching certification program, serving as the Arctic Winter Games Chef de mission and co-founding the Sport North Federation in the 1970's. He served as coroner and was a member of the Union of Northern Workers and WCB Board. In each of these roles he advocated for everyone to have a voice and be heard.

A true entrepreneur, Dad was never afraid to "Go for it", whether it was running for MLA ("Go for Gosselin"), working tirelessly to bring comfort to families as a Funeral Director, or opening a novelty store (Just Between Friends) so that others could own a "Duck U" shirt, full size gorilla, or edible underwear.

No one loved to dress up more than Dad. He wore his Santa suit proudly for 50 years in the annual Yellowknife Christmas Parade and played the part with gusto and finesse. Dressing up as Santa was his way of making up for things he may have missed out on as a child. He kept his colleagues at the Government of NWT on their toes by sporadically showing up for work as "Rolanda" wearing a black wig and tight blue dress with an augmented chest. He relished making his colleagues uncomfortable, but he enjoyed mortifying his daughters even more. At home he would put on his tighy-whitey shorts (no shirt), knee high black socks, black dress shoes, and toolbelt, simply to mow the lawn or sweep the road.

Our parents knew how to have fun and make guests feel welcome. They hosted parties with thumping reel to reel music, rumoli in all its glory, and hot tub party games. Dad could flambee sambuca and make a mean champagne



tower, but you had not lived until you took Dad's World Liquor Tour. He'd walk guests through the swirl, (scratch) sniff and sip. When others rushed, he would remind them "Like sex, take your time".

Dad could tell one helluva story. He enjoyed showing friends their northern art and sharing the stories that came with them. Dad would hold up a white 18-inch long bone and asked his guests, "What do you think this is?" When the guesses ran out, he would say "This is a walrus penis. Now you know why you haven't seen a female walrus that isn't smiling." Laughter would ensue. He was a fantastic storyteller.

Dad passed down many values: speak your mind; respect is earned; be resourceful and frugal; keep your commitments, be a risk taker; be kind;

know the value of a dollar; care for your loved ones and stand up for yourself and others. He taught us how to change the oil in a car, chop wood, cut down the perfect Christmas tree, cast a fishing line, swim, be a strong negotiator, unfreeze a pipe with a blow dryer, use an auger for ice fishing, install baby gates, pan for gold, laugh often and laugh at yourself.

He was the kind of father who built an ice rink in our backyard that all the neighbourhood kids (mostly hockey boys) were allowed on only after his girls were finished skating. He was the kind of grandfather who sat attentively cheering hard for them in their sports on the sidelines. He loved playing with his grandchildren sifting pay dirt, tinkering, building, air hockey, and roughhousing in the pool. He was an avid supporter and fan of his grandchildren Liam, Ainsley, Kayla and Jessica.

Dementia robbed my dad of many things as it so cruelly does. His devilish personality and sense of humour were not among those things. For that I'm truly grateful. A couple of months before he passed, I asked him if he knew who I was. He looked at me incredulously and responded "Yes, Tanya I am Herman Magochuk". Then a sly grin spread across his face.

He was a fantastic flirt, quick-witted, kind, gregarious and spontaneous. What Dad would want more than anything is for you to "Go for it", to take a risk and try something new.

We are comforted knowing you are up there doing the dance circuit with mom.

Thank you for your love
Dad/Grandpa.

You are missed.
Love, Tanya.

