



Gary Bruce Kretchmer

October 31, 1946 - December 29, 2020

Gary was born October 31, 1946 in Kansas City, Missouri to Leon and Pearl Kretchmer. He graduated from Center High School in 1964 and received his undergraduate degree in the field of Science and M.S. degree in social work from UMKC. He was also a licensed counselor. After teaching junior high for a few years, Gary began his career at Johnson County Court Services, initially as a probation officer. Eventually, he became one of a small group of pioneers, guided by Judge Herbert Walton, that introduced family mediation to the Johnson County court system. The current program has grown into one of the most successful court-ordered mediation programs in the nation.

As a peacemaker, a professional mediator, Gary filled a unique role in our community. Over a nearly 35+ year career, he quietly and confidentially helped tens of thousands of divorcing Johnson County families avoid destructive and expensive litigation by resolving their child custody disputes in his office and not in a courtroom. While his labors were often hidden from plain sight, there are so many families in Kansas City that are better off because of him. Strangely, most probably don't know or understand what or even how he did it. He stood at a dangerous intersection and implored drivers to turn right and not left. Those that accepted his guidance, avoided the nasty pile up that divorce can be-- particularly for children. Gary modeled for divorcing families a certain selflessness and decency that thankfully was highly contagious.

Although many have tried to replicate his successes as a mediator, most know that this is simply not possible. He was that good. Gary's achievements were not like talent bestowed upon him as a gift, as for example, athleticism. He didn't do God's work because he was uniquely equipped, or because he was summoned or commanded to do so. He did it because he knew it was the right thing to do. He was constant in his commitment of the pursuit of his chosen ideals. Gary trained mediators throughout the community, state, and nation. Gary served on the board of Johnson/Wyandotte County CASA, and provided training for the domestic/custody program. He was honored to be invited, in 1990 and 1991, to do a week-long training for social workers and lawyers at the University of Nuremberg, in Germany.

Beyond being a professional peacemaker, Gary was quite simply a good man, a fiercely loyal friend and a godsend as a spouse, parent and grandparent. While most of us can muster a daily kind word or two, an occasional decent gesture, Gary did it for a lifetime; not occasionally, but continually. His life was an unparalleled achievement of decency and kindness.

While we will all miss him, his life will continue to inspire and guide us. We love you, Gary, and we are forever grateful for how you chose to shape your life, and how in turn, your life shaped each of us. The world, and especially those that knew and loved you, will forever be enriched by the joy, love, and deliciously snarky good humor that you freely shared with all.

Gary is survived by his wife of 35 years, Sheryl; his stepson, Christopher (Caroline); his brother Robert Kretchmer (Mariame); his granddaughters, Elizabeth and Emily; and his nieces, Lesley (Kelly) and Alyssa (Adam); and his grandnieces and nephew, Kendall, Brett and Anna.

A private graveside service was held on January 3, 2021. A Celebration of Life memorial will be scheduled at a later date. Any donations in Gary's memory should be made to Harvesters (<https://www.harvesters.org/give-food>) or the American Psoriasis Association (<https://www.psoriasis.org/donate>). This obituary was written with the help of Gary's friend and mediator, Greg Kincaid.

Cemetery

Mt. Moriah Cemetery
10507 Holmes Road
Kansas City, MO,

Events

JAN 3 **Zoom Graveside Service** 10:30AM

Please call funeral home for Zoom information.
MO, US

JAN 3 **Private family service**

Mt. Moriah Cemetery
10507 Holmes Road, Kansas City, MO, US

Comments



“ Gary the K - That's what he was known as at where we worked together in the 70's before he went on to be the mediator he became known for. He was very dependable and extremely hard working, and a good friend for years. When he got a full time job in his field he decided to continue to work Saturdays saying it humbled him. We enjoyed K C Scouts hockey games, Royals games and innumerable lunches over the time we worked together.

I never knew his middle name but I knew his dog named Bruce. Plus Gary owned every color of Levi cords known to man. Funny the things you remember. After moving to Florida we felt honored to be asked to meet Gary and Sheryl in New Orleans several times on their annual Spring Break trip.

Only Good Memories.

Kathy and Rich

Moseley, Virginia

Kathy and Rich - January 18 at 10:25 AM



“ Bill always cherished his talks with Gary, he was one of Bills' favorite people. I'm remembering fun times together with Sheryl & Gary. The Kretchmers were always welcoming and loving friends. Prayers coming for you Sheryl, I walked this road and know how hard it is. Call me if you ever need to talk, I am happy to listen. Gods' peace to you and your family. Karen Isenhour

karen Isenhour - January 17 at 03:20 PM



“ Leah and I reflect back to the "True Family" years at Congregation Kol Ami with you with and Gary, whether its was the Oneg prepping, Shabbat Services, or just kibbitzing afterwards no matter which congregation we where all affiliated with. He will be sorely missed in both hearts and minds, and extend our most sincerest condolences to Sheryl and family.

Leah and Lenny Bassin

Lenny Bassin - January 17 at 08:56 AM



“ You made the world a better place; I am a better person having the privilege of knowing you and having you part of my life. You taught me so much, you were my mentor: not just in the field of mediation but, to a much greater degree, in life and what it means to be a noble servant. I'm still learning! I miss you but you are now unencumbered by your body to continue doing “God's work” as you would say.
Peace, Gary

Shorey Berlin - January 05 at 09:38 PM



“ When the pandemic ended our meals with Bob B. at Adrian's and with Sheryl & Bev at Waldo Pizza, and when winter ended talks on their deck, phone calls kept us going. Zoom brought us his scripture reading at the close of Rosh Hashanah; during Hanukkah he said the house was very well lit. Of course. On mediation, Gary said, "This is God's work." Of course. That's what gives it meaning. My mentor and rabbi all the way through.

Peace to Sheryl and family.
-- Bill Ryan

Bill Ryan - January 04 at 01:13 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Chris Anderson - January 03 at 11:12 PM



“ Gary was an icon in mediation training. Gary's contributions are immeasurable. May you find peace in your grief.

Karen Anderson - January 03 at 06:06 PM



“ I met Gary when I started working at Court Services, early in my professional career. Gary was my supervisor, my mentor, and my friend. It was an honor and a pleasure to work with somebody who felt passionately about doing the best possible to help ease the pain of hurting families. Gary led all who worked with him in that effort whenever we tried to make sense of the pain we saw families experiencing. Gary was at the forefront when Johnson County began offering mediation services for parents. As time passed, all of us who worked with Gary became connected to one another and to the work we did, even if we worked at different times and not together. He truly was a peacemaker in all aspects of his life. Although Many years have passed since I worked with Gary, we continued to talk and he continued to encourage me in all my endeavors, professional and personal. Gary represented the power of love and forgiveness in his work. He was bigger than life but very gentle. I will miss his encouragement and humor. I will miss his self deprecating greetings and messages left on my phone such as “ It’s just your old friend, Gary”. I feel fortunate to have known Sheryl too as she brought such joy and happiness to Gary. I send my condolences to Sheryl and Chris and a virtual hug right now.

Liz Graham - January 03 at 04:52 PM



“ Gary was my first mentor and one I will never forget. He was brilliant, patient, extremely witty, and always believed in me when I had many doubts. My world was better, having known him. I am sorry to hear of his passing; he left a legacy that still inspires me.

Kathleen McCarther - January 03 at 03:30 PM



“ Gary was a great friend for 30 years and we had many memories and fun trips together with him and Sheryl. He was a very caring man and his dry sense of humor will be truly missed.
Skip/Gay Scholz

Skip/Gay Scholz - January 03 at 02:04 PM



“ I learned much about mediation from Gary. He was an excellent mediator with a very low key approach. He was a marvel to observe be it teaching or conducting a mediation.
He will be missed.
I do not remember where this quote came from, but it has always brought me comfort.
"To live in the heart of those left behind, is not to die"

Bob Williams

Bob Williams - January 03 at 01:08 PM



“ Best wishes to the family and friends of Gary Kretchmer. Gary was welcoming and supportive when we started the first family mediation program in the Northland. He never failed to provide meaningful insights and advice. I especially cherished Gary for his humor, his humility, and his ability to bring some sunlight into every situation. He was soft-spoken but his messages were thought-provoking. So many families and mediators have been blessed by engagement with him. I feel so fortunate for our community that he was part of it for so long.

Kathleen Bird - January 03 at 12:06 PM



“ Gary believed this could be a better world -- and he demonstrated for thousands of people how this could happen.

Peg Nichols - January 03 at 10:42 AM



“ Sheryl, I am so sorry to hear about Gary's passing. Not only a wonderful man but so inspirational. I will miss our conversations. May his memory be a blessing and may he have eternal peace. Conrad Daniels



Conrad Daniels - January 02 at 09:21 PM



“ Thinking of your family during these difficult times. May sweet memories be a source of comfort and joy in the future!

Ron and Gayle Levin

Gayle Levib - January 02 at 09:13 PM



“ Sheryl and Family,

We are saddened to learn of Gary's passing. We were honored and privileged to have met both of you many years ago through Kol Ami. We are grateful to call you friends. May your wonderful memories be of comfort to you and may he rest in peace.

Carla and Mickey Lieberman

Carla Lieberman - January 02 at 01:37 PM



“ Leona Boeger Solar is following this tribute.

Leona Solar - January 01 at 08:13 PM



“ Gary was the best stepdad I could ever ask for. He never tried to be my dad or be my "best friend"- he was just Gary, which means he was warm, thoughtful, kind, witty, measured, patient, EXTREMELY HUMBLE, selfless, and loving. I'll miss hearing "Tell me something good", "Enough about me, how are you?" and "Love you, bud" every day.

Chris Anderson, stepson.

Chris Anderson - January 01 at 07:27 PM



“ Gary was a dear friend during jr. high at Center South and later at Center HS. A funny and endearing guy. We'll miss him

Joel Ray

Joel Ray - January 01 at 04:09 PM



“ Gary and I went to Center HS together and spent lots of time together, especially Summers. He was kind, soft spoken, funny and easy to be with. We enjoyed each other's company and continued a sporadic relationship as adults. It would years between visits, but we always had things to talk about.

I will miss him.

Harry Himmelstein

Harry Himmelstein - January 01 at 12:26 PM



“ I was so honored to know and work with (for) Gary. The world is a much sadder place without him in it! He truly was an amazing man with an incredibly good heart, and he will be missed by all who were fortunate enough to know him!

Tammi Hallock - January 01 at 12:24 PM



“ Sheryl and Family,
We were privileged and honored to have met the both of you at Kol Ami many years ago and have been happy to call you friends. May your wonderful memories bring you comfort and may he rest in peace. With love,
Carla and Mickey Lieberman

Carla Lieberman - January 01 at 10:10 AM



“ Bob, so sorry for your loss. I remember Gary as your younger brother when you moved into the neighborhood in the 60's.



Rita Shapiro - January 01 at 05:51 AM



“ Don And Ruthann Zurovsky lit a candle in memory of Gary Bruce Kretchmer



Don and Ruthann zurovsky - December 31, 2020 at 08:43 PM



“ Gary was a caring,compassionate, generous, thoughtful person. Gary and I shared many good times during our childhood. He will be missed by all who knew and loved him. Brother bob

robert kretchmer - December 31, 2020 at 11:44 AM



“ Fair well dear friend. You loved so well. You heard so carefully the tough and the good times. Will miss spending time together.

Darryl Bertsch - January 01 at 05:41 PM



“ I thought the world of Gary. Am so sorry for your loss Sheryl, Bob, Alyssa. & family. Georgann

Georgann - January 02 at 12:58 PM



“ Gina and I will miss Gary's presence like missing a gorgeous sunrise appearing on an otherwise bleak morning. Gary was the epitome of what it means to be a true mensch. A classy guy whose mere being seemed to have a calming effect on chaos that seems to be infecting our world. A fighter to the bitter end, and an end that just seems so unfair. RIP our good friend we will always think of you as a guiding light in uncertain time

Ben & Gina Silk - January 02 at 01:15 PM



“ So saddened to hear of Gary's passing. He was instrumental in helping me when I started my mediation training in Kansas. His insight and willingness to share his knowledge and expertise was so helpful!! It was always good to see him and gain some wisdom and laughter. Will keep the family on Gary lifted up in my prayers. Vickie Harris

Vickie Harris - January 03 at 01:28 PM



“ Sheryl, So sorry to hear about your husband. This is Theresa Smith, I worked kinda with you at Piper years ago (about 2001-02) I was a para in the preschool, (w/ Patty Jolley). You may not remember me, but I wanted to send my condolences. Take care and have comfort in God's word. Theresa Smith

Theresa Smith - January 03 at 02:20 PM



“ Gary was a cousin I barely knew until I was a student at KU. He was my Aunt Pearl's son and looked so much like her brother, my grandfather. Gary was always so sweet and kind, and I feel blessed that I got to know him while I was in college. Sending condolences to Sheryl and her son.....I hope time will ease the pain of his loss

Cari - January 05 at 06:42 PM



“ Sheryl. So sorry to hear about Gary's passing. It was my pleasure to serve as his dentist for many years. I always enjoyed hearing about your trips to New Orleans. He was a kind and gentle man. Peace and comfort to you. Michael Dix

Michael Dix - January 17 at 08:35 AM



“ Sheryl, Gary was such a friend & boy did he make me laugh. The stories I could tell! I met you when I went out to eat with Gary & John Clarke one evening. Thinking of you during this loss. One of a kind...that guy.

Peggy Jones Robinson - January 17 at 11:02 AM



“ Dear Sheryl, Wanted to send our deepest sympathy to you and Chris. We met Gary at Rolling Hills with you. We are surely thinking of you. Dorothy and Bruce Larkin and family

Dorothy Larkin - January 17 at 03:33 PM

Sheryl Larkin - January 17 at 08:00 PM



“ Sheryl, Although we knew you two for only a few years, you welcomed Rita and me into a new environment so that we felt like lifelong friends. Later you gave me support at a time when I really needed it. That was more than a couple of years ago but you two still occupy a warm spot in my heart. If I can ever help you, give me a call at Village Shalom where I have lived since Rita passed over five years ago. May G-d bless you.

Larry Poisner January 26 at 4:21 PM

Larry Poisner - January 26 at 05:23 PM