

A PRAYER IN THE GOTHICS: FRIENDS OF DEWITT HIKER HAD TO PUSH ON HIKER'S FRIENDS TELL OF LAUGHS, AND LOVE

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- Author/Byline: Jim McKeever Staff writer
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Bob Daly of DeWitt died doing what he loved in one of his favorite places.

Last Saturday, Daly was hiking in the Adirondacks with two friends. The trio was aiming for the summit of the Gothics, one of the range's 46 High Peaks.

But high winds and bitter cold forced the three experienced hikers to turn back, and they began to trek the 3.3 miles to their base camp.

Along the way, Daly fell and began to favor his right arm, said Ken Knapp, one of his companions. Knapp and fellow hiker Jeff Thurston asked Daly if he was hurt, and he replied, "No, I'm just very exhausted," Knapp recalled Tuesday.

A few minutes later Daly sat down in the snow and fell over, Knapp said.

Knapp and Thurston tried to revive Daly for about 10 or 15 minutes, Knapp said, but Daly had no pulse.

With temperatures dropping and the wind chill well below zero, Knapp and Thurston tried to carry Daly but gave up after about 100 yards.

"We knew we were putting ourselves in danger" by trying to push on, Knapp said. So the two men said a short prayer and left Daly on the trail.

"That was the hardest part, just second-guessing ourselves constantly until we got the autopsy results," Knapp said.

Dr. Herbert Bergamini, Essex County coroner, said Daly - who would have turned 58 Tuesday - died of a heart attack.

"His companions did the best they could," Bergamini said.

Knapp and Thurston - who did not have a cell phone - reached base camp, where a volunteer staff member called park rangers. After hearing details of Daly's condition and consulting with doctors, rangers decided to wait until Sunday morning to retrieve his body, Capt. Dan Walsh of the state Department of Environmental Conservation said.

A search party retrieved Daly's body, which was lifted off the mountain by helicopter.

Daly's wife of 30 years, Myra Daly, said her husband would have gotten a kick out of that.

"He would love telling that story," she said. "It just should've happened 40 years from now."

Myra Daly said her husband was an incredibly devoted family man who loved to brag about their two grown children, Lisa Daly of Syracuse and David Daly of Urbana, Ill.

"I hit the lucky number when I got him," she said. "He was one of a kind."

Bob Daly loved the outdoors so much, he never let the calendar interfere with his plans.

One bitterly cold New Year's Eve a few years ago, Myra Daly said, she and her husband ushered in the new year with a kiss. Then Bob Daly headed out to the back yard to sleep in new camping gear he had bought and wanted to try out.

Bill Parker, Daly's boss at Agway for seven years and a frequent hiking companion, said Daly was fond of new gadgets he could use in the mountains.

Last September, Daly, Parker and another hiker attempted to climb Allen Mountain, another of the Adirondacks' 46 high peaks. It would have been Daly's 45th conquest, but he entered the wrong coordinates into his Global Positioning System.

"We missed it because Bob got us on the wrong trail," Parker recalled, laughing. "That wasn't the first time, either."

After 23 years at Agway, Daly retired last year as director of computer and communications services.

"He loved" retirement, Myra Daly said. "He started strength training. He joined the gym. He had a stack of books, all kinds of books. I was so spoiled. He'd cook dinners and, on Fridays, my day off, we'd go out."

In addition to being an experienced hiker and winter camper, Bob Daly was a fixture in the Central New York running community. He was a regular participant in area races and was co-organizer of a running program for disabled children from the Syracuse Developmental Center.

Myra Daly said her husband's body will be cremated, and his ashes will be taken to the Adirondacks this spring.

"So he's going back to the mountains," she said.

- **Caption:** PHOTO Photo by Bob Krenitsky/Courtesy of family BOB DALY, shown in June 2000 on Cascade Mountain. COLOR MAP: Gothic Mountain. Syracuse Newspapers.

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