



Constantine John Dermas "Gus"

March 2, 1929 - March 17, 2023

Constantine John Dermas ("Gus") passed away peacefully at his home on Friday, March 17, 2023, surrounded by his loving family. Gus was born on March 2, 1929, in Mikro Horio, Evrytania, Greece.

Gus immigrated to the United States in 1947 following World War II. He dutifully served in the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict and then made his way from New York City down to Greensboro, North Carolina where he and his brother-in-law, Cleo Kontoulas, opened a diner. True to their character and unflappable sense of right and wrong, in this diner, Gus and Cleo served the black community exclusively, during the time of the sit-in movement in the civil rights era.

In 1962, Gus moved to Asheville and bought a small café, the Stoney Knob Restaurant, which eventually became the Stoney Knob Café. It exists to this day as the longest standing family-owned restaurant in town. Gus met his wife, Ismini, in 1966 and together they built a beautiful and full life. They worked hard and selflessly gave to their family, their patrons, and their community.

Gus was an active member of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, where he was the chanter for decades. He had a silky-smooth voice like Perry Como that often brought people to tears. He was a man of strength, faith, grace, and – most of all – profound love. He was honest, had the highest sense of integrity, and never had an ill word to say about anyone. In his prime, he was an avid rabbit hunter with trusty loyal beagles whom he loved like his children.

He earned his Ph.D. as the hardest working man on the planet. Until the very end of his life, he could be found cutting grass, trimming trees, catching groundhogs under his deck, or peeling potatoes at the restaurant. And, on top of all that, he maintained a gorgeous and prolific vegetable garden.

Gus's favorite quote was "straight ahead." To that end, we will all continue "straight ahead." He will be dearly missed. He was preceded in death by his wife of 49 years, Ismini Dermas; his parents, Katarina and John Dermatas; his sisters, Antigone Chronopolous and Constantina ("Dena") Kontoulas. He is survived by his sons, John Gus Dermas and Yotty Dermas; grandchildren, Maria Ioanna Dermas and Constantine Dermas; and numerous other family members and friends. The family would like to express their deepest gratitude to Abby Day, whom Gus loved and appreciated, and who cared for him dearly in his final days.

The family will receive friends from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church on Sunday, March 19, 2023, concluding with a Trisagion. Funeral services will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, March 20, 2023, at the church with Father Michael Diavatis officiating. Interment will follow at Lewis Memorial Park. The family will gather privately after the burial.

In lieu of customary remembrances, the family requests, with gratitude, that memorial contributions in Gus's name be directed to Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, 227 Cumberland Ave, Asheville, NC 28801.

Cemetery Details

Lewis Memorial Park

415 Beaverdam Road
Asheville, NC 28804

Previous Events

Reception

MAR **19**. 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM (ET)

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
227 Cumberland Ave.
Asheville, NC 28801
<http://www.holytrinityasheville.com/>

Reception will conclude with a Trisagion.

Funeral Service

MAR **20**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
227 Cumberland Ave.
Asheville, NC 28801
<http://www.holytrinityasheville.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Constantine John Dermas "Gus"* ”

October 07, 2023 at 11:15 AM



“ *Joann Jennings lit a candle in memory of Constantine John Dermas "Gus"* ”



Joann Jennings - March 19, 2023 at 10:28 PM



Yotty so sorry for your loss. I was Little Beaver director when you were there. Loved your mom also.

Gale Wheeler (Moody) - March 20, 2023 at 01:21 PM



Like talking to Gus when he was eating at the bar and talk about his dogs and garden. He was a Great Man.

Carr Swicegood - March 21, 2023 at 08:30 AM



“ *Melanie Rybicki lit a candle in memory of Constantine John Dermas "Gus"* ”



Melanie Rybicki - March 19, 2023 at 10:27 PM

MR

“ Dear Yotty, Please accept my condolences in the passing of your father. I really enjoyed reading his story and looking at the old photos on the Stony Knob website. What a remarkable person your father was and what a beautiful life he led.

Melanie Rybicki - March 19, 2023 at 10:26 PM

JJ

“ I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Mr Dermus. I will always have fond memories of seeing and speaking with him while he was working in Yotty's yard. I would visit with him and we would talk about flowers, food, and Stony Knob Restaurant when it was a diner many years ago. We told each other we were working too hard and laugh, then go about our day. On Friday, heaven received another angel. My heart goes out to Yotty and John and their family.

Joann Jennings - March 19, 2023 at 10:16 PM

MR

“ I often have lunch at the Stoney Knob and after having the Country Style Steak one day I introduced myself to Gus and complimented him on it.

That began our friendship, if he was at the counter when I arrived I'd sit with him.

During those lunches I asked about his life and he recounted it. His childhood in Greece, taking a ship to New York to meet his father who he barely knew, working as a busboy in a restaurant and being made a cook in the army because of that experience.

And after that the life he made for himself and his family. Operating a restaurant that served three meals a day with a cot in the back so that he could nap in the afternoon. And when he was ready to retire he offered it to his sons who made it what it is today.

In preparing food he was the quintessential chef and on occasion shared with me a meal he'd made for himself "out of something in the back".

Once, I asked how he made the bean salad - he described the process and I listed the ingredients on my receipt - all twelve of them.

And those potatoes he peeled for Sunday brunch instead of serving frozen potatoes - when I asked about that he explained he worked about 16 hours each week to make that happen.

He was also a man who valued knowledge and learning, when I recently used the word aesthetics he brought up its Greek origin and meaning

and he mentioned that he still consulted the dictionary to further his understanding of English.

And sometimes we shared a laugh.

When he mentioned that his house needed a woman's touch to keep things in order - something missing since the passing of his wife - I responded that if he could only get that lawn mower inside he could make things right and he got a big laugh out of that.

*Gus was an impeccable human being - I offer my condolences to the family
and I will miss the opportunity to share lunch and conversation with him.*

Mike Rouse

Mike Rouse - March 19, 2023 at 04:54 PM

CH

“ *I only new Gus through my brother Eric, whom was a regular patron for a number of years. I can see now reading about him all the qualities he had, what a life, I had at least the honor to met him and his loving family several times. Thank you Gus. With love Chris Hedberg*

chris hedberg - March 19, 2023 at 01:26 PM

SP

“ *We send our Love and Condolences to Gus's family. John and Yotty we are truly sorry for the loss of your Father. He was a Great man; Loving , Caring and a friend to everyone he met. We knew him for 50 years . May his memory be eternal. He will be an Angel in Heaven watching over you All.with love,
John and Susan Poulos
The SITARAS Family*

susan poulos - March 19, 2023 at 11:55 AM

RB

“ My first job was at the restaurant. Guy and his sons taught me how to work. Guy taught me how to make coffee, clean windows the right way (with newspaper!) And how to sweep...yes, how to sweep, away from yourself not towards yourself. May not sound life changing but it some ways it has been. I think of him often when performing those frequent tasks. My condolences to John and Yotti. Though his life was long and full I know his physical absence will be deeply missed.

Rebecca Barnes - March 19, 2023 at 01:52 AM

MT

“ Oh John and Yotty, Rick and I are heartbroken to hear Gus has gone to join your mother and all the saints. He was such a special, warm and wonderful gentleman, and his smile radiated all good things. I always felt a lift when I saw him. We so regret we won't be home in time to grieve with you at the service, but we will be there in spirit and you will be in our hearts.
Marti T

Marti Touchstone - March 18, 2023 at 09:19 PM



“ All the Hedbergs send condolences and love to the Dermas family. We have fond memories of the old diner and the new, with Gus as the center of it all. May he rest in peace now and may all of you cherish his memory and gifts. -- Karin & Gerald

Karin Hedberg - March 18, 2023 at 08:31 PM

CR

“ I fondly recall Gus when we regularly brought our family of four to his diner in the 80s for breakfast or lunch. We loved his garden out back and that he used his homegrown produce at the diner. He is proud of handsome, successful sons who took the diner to a new level and I live across the road from one of them, where I've seen Gus mowing the lawn up until recently. Lovely, loving man, leaving a lovely, loving legacy. He's now flying high and free and closer to what he loves than ever. 🌹

carol-Lani Rose - March 18, 2023 at 07:16 PM

ME

“ John and Yiotti,

My thoughts and prayers are with you both as you grieve the loss of your sweet father. Every time I went to church in Asheville, he never missed an opportunity to remind me of how John and I would fight like cats and dogs as children! Your father will be missed. May his memory be eternal.

*Hugs,
Xenoula*

Maria Xenakis Easton - March 18, 2023 at 06:31 PM

CI

“ I worked for Gus at Stoney Knob Restaurant. He was a great man of God and humor. God bless you Gus and your family. Rest peacefully in our Father's arms. Please pat my Son on his back and say "Well done Shorty" 😊

Cindy - March 18, 2023 at 03:48 PM

AX

“ Αγαπημενα μας εξαδελφια ειλικρινα και θερμα συλληπητηρια για το θανατο του πολυ ξεχωριστου αγαπημενου μας και μεγαλου αγωνιστη ΚΩΣΤΑ αιωνια του η μνημη .Παντοτε θα τον θυμομαστε ο Θεος ας αναπαυσει τη ψυχη του.ΕΦΥΓΕ και ο τελευταιος απο τα τρια αγαπημενα αδελφια. αρης -λουκια

ΑΡΙΣΤΕΙΔΗΣ ΧΡΟΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ - March 18, 2023 at 02:51 PM

SA

“ John and Yotty "Zoe se mas", I feel as though I have lost another father, what can I say. I have known your father for many years and considered him much more than a friend as I did of your sweet mother. Sue and I both thought the world of both of them. We are very saddened to hear of his passing. We will have you both in our hearts and prayers. Gus was a true gentleman and anyone that knew him should consider themselves very fortunate.

Spiro Aliferis - March 18, 2023 at 12:16 PM

BF

I worked for Gus, back in the 60thhe was such a sweet a gentle man , Years later in the 2016 I went back in to the restaurant and I asked about him. He was sitting a stool at the Bar and he spoke to me I said Gus do you remember me, He said sure that my little Brenda, I said yes, we talked for awhile. It was so good to see him again, I will never for get this man ,May you rest in the arms of our Lord.

Brenda Gibson Ford - March 18, 2023 at 04:43 PM

MM

“ As patrons of Stoney Knob we always looked forward to talking with Gus on the way in and out of the restaurant. He will certainly be missed.

Marilyn Mitchell - March 18, 2023 at 11:57 AM

EC

“ I am proud to have known Gus and his late wife Minnie for my whole life. Stoney Knob diner is a landmark my own family history. My parents met there on my father’s very first day as a new resident of Weaverville in 1962—my mom was my dad’s waitress that morning.

Like Gus, my grandfather was a European immigrant and an entrepreneur. When Gus bought the diner, my father and grandfather were building their factory just a stone’s throw away from the diner and they visited it on an almost daily basis—for coffee in the morning, lunch at midday, and sometimes both. Whenever we were there as a family, Gus always had kind words and a smile for each of us, kids included. He and Minnie always made us feel at home.

Over the years, as the diner evolved and both of our families grew and experienced the passage of loved ones, Gus was a continual presence. Just a few weeks ago, I enjoyed what would be my last encounter with him. I was, as always, there for lunch with my family. He was, as always, on his stool at the counter. I tapped him on the shoulder and he turned around, smiling widely when he saw it was us. He greeted me warmly with his usual “Hey, young ‘un!” After chatting briefly, we parted and left Gus at the counter. I will remember him like that: sitting on his stool, surrounded by the fruit of his lifetime of labor—a thriving restaurant where he and Minnie raised their sons and nourished our community for 60 years.

He will be deeply missed.

Erika Conrad - March 18, 2023 at 11:40 AM

JG

“ *John and Yotty*

We are so sorry to learn of your father's passing. We know he shall be missed and had a wonderful life. We shall keep you in our thoughts and prayers. Jim & Joyce

Joyce Greene - March 18, 2023 at 11:00 AM

LB

Please accept our condolences as well.

Lynnea and Charlie Bowman

Lynnea Bowman - March 18, 2023 at 12:14 PM

NT

John and Yioti, we are very saddened to hear about the passing of Gus. May you both have a long life to remember him (ZOE SE SAS). I met Gus several years ago and during our retirement years, many times we were getting together with other retirees having coffee and conversations. At times we were going back to our early life talking about things we had in common. Gus served at our church as chanter for many years. I remember when he started chanting. I always enjoyed his chanting and the reading of the epistle in Greek. I made it known to him and requested that he reads the epistle in Greek more often. Your parents, Gus and Ismini, were remarkable couple. Most of the time, I took the opportunity to greet them after church on Sundays. Our prayers and thoughts are with you for the loss of your father. We will miss him also.

Nick and Anastacia Tsiros

Nick Tsiros - March 18, 2023 at 11:21 PM