

A Life: Larry Flint ‘just chose to focus on the positive’



NEWPORT — When Larry Flint received a liver transplant in 1991, he was told he could expect to live another seven to nine years.

Flint beat those odds, and then some.

“He was a 33-year survivor of a liver transplant and he squeezed every ounce of life out of his body,” said his daughter Karyn Fisher, who lives in Strafford, N.H. “Once he got that transplant, he didn’t stop. You rest, you rust, that was his motto.”

Flint did more than survive; he embraced his second chance and led a life grounded in doing for others, and in promoting healthy and active lifestyles in Newport and across the state.

Fisher and her sister, Laura Maravetz, of Waterbury Center, Vt., compiled a list of 24 organizations that their

father participated in during his career and retirement. The New Hampshire Senior Games, the Newport Senior Center, Newport Recreation Advisory Committee and the Knights of Columbus are a small sample of his civic and community involvement. He was still an active member in a dozen of the organizations until his death on March 20 at age 78, when his liver finally failed.

“I don’t know how he kept all the balls in the air,” said his close friend, Chris Dugan, another participant in the Senior Games, athletic competitions for older adults. “I always admired him for that.”

Lawrence Flint was born in Worcester, Mass., on May 16, 1946 to Frederick and Georgianna Flint and grew up with three sisters. After high school he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and was stationed in the Philippines during the Vietnam War.

He and his wife, Marie, whom he met in 1964, were married before his overseas deployment. They were together for 51 years before her death in 2018. Upon his return to civilian life, Flint earned an undergraduate degree in environmental design at the University of Massachusetts and a master's in recreation resources at North Carolina State.

While he attended N.C. State, his wife worked, which meant Larry watched their two young daughters a lot of the time when the family lived in Raleigh.

“He would take us to campus and take us around,” Maravetz said. “He was a very hands-on dad at a time when stay-at-home moms were more common.”

His devotion to his wife and children were always in evidence, say those who knew Flint.

“Larry and Marie were deeply committed to their daughters and invested in their education and lives,” said Bill Thurlow, a former Newport Middle High School teacher who knew Flint from the Newport Recreation Advisory Committee and as a fellow parent. “Those young ladies certainly reflected his values and principles.”

Flint began his 35-year career in recreation in Framingham, Mass., before being hired in 1981 as Newport's recreation director, where he served until 1991.

Flint was hired in Newport at a time when the recreation department needed a shot in the arm, said Thurlow, who was chairman of the town's recreation advisory committee at the time.

“He threw all of himself into it and took advantage of every opportunity he could at the facility to provide recreational opportunities for people,” Thurlow said. “And he always did it with a sense of humor and a great deal of integrity. He was just a great person to have in the community.”

At the senior center, Flint and Marie were regulars. Flint would dress in theme outfits with fellow workers when he delivered meals. He passed out grab-and-go meals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Making people smile brought him so much joy,” Maravetz said. “He just loved doing what he was doing, whether he was paid or not. He was a born giver and he died giving.”

When Flint converted to Catholicism he joined the Knights of Columbus and rose to Grand Knight. For 15 years, he served an hour in the weekly 24-hour Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, often taking the midnight hour or later if someone needed him to fill in, said Allen Ouellette with the Knights of Columbus.

“He took the difficult times, maybe 1 a.m or 2 a.m.,” Ouellette said. “Larry was a doer. He did not wait around for things to happen. He said, ‘I’ll do it,’ and would roll up his sleeves.”

Flint also worked in Sunapee and then Durham, N.H., in recreation before returning to Newport to work in the post office until his retirement.

Flint umpired softball for close to 50 years and also ran the adult volleyball league at the recreation center for more than 40 years.

Beth Rexford, administrative assistant for the recreation department, recalled Flint’s sense of humor when he came up with the name for her team, “Wrecked.” She said he often gave pointers to players to help them improve while he was refereeing.

“He was very easy going and had a heart of gold,” Rexford said.

As high school athletic director for Newport, Thurlow said he could always rely on Flint to be there when they needed an umpire for softball and he brought more than knowledge of the game to his umpiring duties.

“He knew the technical aspects of the game but it was also how he dealt with the kids,” Thurlow said. “He was always very positive and supportive.”

The emotional benefits of recreation that came from people engaging with each other were as important as the physical benefits for Flint.

“Larry was really all about getting people involved,” said Dugan, who lives in Hooksett, N.H., and met Flint about 20 years ago through the New Hampshire Senior Games and the New Hampshire Alliance for Healthy Aging. “The way Larry viewed sports, it was all about people participating. It didn’t matter if you were a lifetime athlete or trying something for the first time.

“He understood the bigger picture of what older adults really needed and the connection between physical and emotional health,” Dugan said. “He loved celebrating what people did, whether it was winning or just getting involved.”

His health challenges, which included a stroke in 2005, were never a barrier to Flint. His gregarious and generous outlook inspired many.

“Talk about a role model for positivity, that was Larry,” said PJ Lovely, Newport’s recreation director since 1995. “Unbelievable. You could not get the guy down, and he had reasons to be down. But he never shook a stick at the cards he had been dealt.”

When Flint had to come to terms with his wife’s death in 2018, Maravetz said her father joined bereavement groups and that opened the door to his healing and helping others heal.

“He became quite open about speaking about the depression he was experiencing after my mom’s death and he would try to get others connected to support groups,” Maravetz said. “It impressed me about him that he was willing to share that and help other people. One man came up to me after Dad’s funeral and told me how much my father helped him with his loss.”

A mental health first aid course provided Flint with insights on how to recognize a neighbor or someone in the community who might need additional support, which became another avenue for Flint to do what he loved doing the most: helping and encouraging others.

“He was always geared toward helping his fellow community members,” said Maravetz, who works in the mental health field. “He just chose to focus on the positive. He didn’t focus on obstacles but how to get where he wanted to go or help someone else get where they wanted.”

Flint was especially thrilled to see the new community center open just before he died.

“This was something he wanted to see completed for 35 years,” Maravetz said. “He may have very well pushed himself to live long enough to see it because it was not too long after that he passed away. It brought him immense joy and pride to know that his vision and passion for recreation, wellness, and social connection would be possible for community members, young and old, for years to come.”

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