

Interview Story

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Kathryn A. Weinzetl, age 66, was born in Olivia, Minnesota on July 6, 1957. Her parents were John (Jack) Tersteeg and Elizabeth A. Tersteeg. Both of her parents are deceased. She is the second oldest of seven children, a family of six girls and one boy. All members of her immediate family are currently alive. She lived on a farm, and her family owned a cabin which was 20 miles from their home in Olivia.

“We never went on vacation because we didn’t have a lot of money,” she said in regard to her family life. “To save money we sewed all of our own clothes, and grew all of our own food.”

She always found Christmas an enjoyable tradition. Every feast of St. Nicholas she and her siblings would wake up to an orange, ribbon candy, and quarter in their shoes. She always loved when her immediate family would host a large Christmas party every year on Christmas Eve.

Growing up, some of her favorite things to do were going for rides on the family’s dirt bike and combine. She said she would sometimes take the dirt bike out for hours, and drive around for miles on country roads. She also loved to waterski with her friends, and she said that sometimes there would be up to four of them behind the boat at once.

She was a very hard worker and had many jobs as a teenager/young adult. The very first job she ever had was helping to detassel corn on the farm. “It was the hardest job ever,” she said, “but it was a way to make money.” She was also a babysitter, and became a cashier at the grocery store in Olivia when she was a teen.

A little later on in life, she got a job as the secretary at an elementary school in Eagan, MN. Her two daughters both went to school there. She also worked at Guiding Star Wakota-a center for pregnancy and family resources.

“Finding a job wasn’t hard because I worked hard, but some of the people I worked with made it hard,” she said. “The people you work with make it or break it.”

She also loved to help friends and neighbors with various tasks, including gardening, which she had a deep love for. “She’s not afraid to get her hands dirty doing various jobs,” said her husband, Joseph Weinzetl. “She loves to help in any way she can.”

Kathryn wasn’t just devoted when it came to her work life. She was devoted to her family as well. “I always admired her desire for family time, and how much she made everyone a priority, despite being busy,” said her daughter, Michelle Weinzetl.

There were many challenges that Kathryn had to face in her lifetime. A few years ago she was diagnosed with cancer. When asked about her thoughts during this stage of her life, she said, “I’ve had a hard last several years. Cancer is the most horrible thing. To have a doctor look you in the eye and tell you that you have cancer and that you could die-that was by far the hardest thing I’ve ever faced.”

Cancer wasn't the only trial in her life. A few years later a hurricane destroyed her home in Florida, and shortly after, her car was totaled in a car accident, leaving her with a few severe injuries, including fractures in her neck, spine, and wrist.

When asked what got her through the hard times, she responded that it was her faith. "My faith is the most important thing to me," she said. "Your faith deepens when your trials are harder." Kathryn is a devoted Catholic who attends mass and prayer groups often. Her faith is a big inspiration for some, especially her family members. "She's had unwavering faith throughout all of this," said her husband Joseph. "I'd say that's what I admire the most about her."