

Zan Barker left an indelible impression

By Robert Schimmel

Have you ever known someone who seemed to naturally and effortlessly bring 100 percent to the table or party at all times? And I don't mean this in terms of the action hero or person with the massive accumulation of toys, property, etc., but rather that extraordinary individual who consistently leaves you with an indelible, positive impression, a lasting and resonant note of caring, a sense that you can do or be more, and a willingness to help you along that path?

For those of you who had the pleasure of knowing Alexander "Zan" Barker over the course of his 64 years, 41 of which were spent here in his adopted home of Lake Tahoe, the above description of his sincere effects on people he'd just meet once or spent years with was always the same.



Alexander
"Zan" Barker

Zan passed away suddenly at his home in Marla Bay on Oct. 2, and I attended his very touching and memories-filled service Oct. 14, during a warm, soft and lovely sunset at Lakeside Beach. It was as perfect as he would have choreographed, from the spiritual ambiance and succinct service to the "gathering of people" whose lives he'd influenced in meaningful ways to his favorite, savory finger foods and delicious wines.

Aside from Zan's photographic passion and skills, his consummate ability to host any event, and his impeccable cooking sense were all present along with a healthy dose of humor and style that he so appreciated and nurtured in himself as well as others.

I met Zan when he first hit the South Shore in 1971 and slept behind the couch in the Bavarian Village condo apartment I shared with two other Tahoe "explorers". But he was very different from all of us: he knew this was home, and his determination with optimism was magnificent and sometimes a bit intimidating as he lovingly, but confidently, began to step into and embellish the mainstream of activity on the South Shore. If you haven't read his Tahoe "bio" that Lori Cramer had to reduce, let me encourage you to do so as it scratches the surface of how many people this man networked with and enjoyed. From athletics to business to city government to the environment to the arts, Zan pushed and pulled with an irresistible, calm force and charm to get the most from all of them. And I was definitely in his sphere of influence and debt.

You may wonder why I didn't just write an obit for him, also. First of all, I am not so qualified and that was handled beautifully. My mission here is to highlight his humanity and bring up what this and any community needs more of: people like Zan with the heart, passion, humility and velvet gloved strength to mobilize visions and the abilities of others into real and concrete relationships and outcomes. Leaders do this without fanfare or hesitation and certainly with no thought of their own self sacrifice. He blessed me with his promotional prowess and giving by sponsoring the Waterfront Gallery on Timber Cove pier in the '80s and commissioning me and others for artwork.

Story after story were told Sunday at "his" Lakeside Beach Grill (he sold it early this year in preparation for a new chapter in life) that just confirmed how one strong and

spirited person with a love for others and a compassionate soul can make a huge difference in the core of a community. I am absolutely amazed at how Zan genuinely touched and changed myriad lives as well as brought total strangers together in unions of common effort and purpose.

Thank you, Zan, dear and respected gentle giant, for being an irreplaceable role model of friendship, generosity, compassion, creativity, insight, philanthropy, networking and benevolence in the world and with the people you loved so much and shared so easily.