

# LEFT THE RANGE

# GARY THOMPSON

BY JULIE GOLOB

I remember the first time I met Gary Thompson. I was just 10 years old, helping my dad Pete Goloski prepare a stage for Pathfinder Fish & Game's Miller Invitational. It was summer, and I can still picture a leathery, tanned Gary cruising around on an ATV, his wild blonde hair standing on end and a wide-open grin spread across his face.

I like to tell my daughters that a smile is a gift you can give to a stranger. In that, Gary was one of the most generous people I have ever known, sharing his signature grin with many.

Gary was the life of the party. My dad says God broke the mold when he made Gary. His wild streak was tempered with a kindness that many benefited from, most of all his close group of shooter friends who became my IPSC aunts and uncles. Shooting brought us together; Gary made us friends.

"My favorite memory of Gary was him singing John Denver's 'Rocky Mountain High' karaoke at RFH's Hideaway in Fulton," Sheila Brey shared. "He looked like John Denver, so it was a natural for him to sing JD. Unfortunately, Gary didn't sound at all like JD - but he did sound a lot like Bob Dylan. Just imagine Bob Dylan singing 'Rocky Mountain High'. I laugh every time I think about it. There were so many good times with Gary, that's just the type of guy he was. He was dedicated to the USPSA shooting community - working matches more than shooting. He could build most anything and get any prop to work. Such a big heart. He surely will be missed."

Fast forward a few decades; Gary and his loving wife Kim left the brutal Fulton, N.Y. winters to retire in Florida, where they lived their dream spending time on and near the ocean. Even from many miles away, Gary was the kind of guy who kept friendships alive and found new ones. He volunteered as a range officer for premiere events, like last year's IPSC U.S. Nationals. Old-timers like Ernie Hill and I caught up on the good old days there with Gary - and yes, with more smiles.

Gary was ready for anything, as Danny Olstad can attest. "At the 2015 IPSC Nationals, Lauren locked the keys in the truck. Gary came to the rescue with an air jack lockout tool kit to unlock the door. Who just happens to carry that around with them? Gary was a part of our shooting family and will be missed dearly. The world will be a less interesting place without him."

One of our N.Y. crew, Ron Halpenny, remembers his daughter Ryan cruising around on a golf cart with Gary, and he brought that passion for motorized vehicles with him to Florida. Gary became fast friends with Shannon Smith, who had this story to share:

"At a match last year at USA he, on a whim, decided he needed a 4-wheeler like all the 'cool kids' at the range. He drove up the road to the



local dealership and bought a \$6K Polaris on the spot, based on the fact it would fit in his pickup truck. He didn't even know how to start it or back it out of his truck. We had to help him when he got back to the range. After the awards of the match, he asked for a picture with me; I walked over to oblige. He held up the keys to the 4-wheeler and took the picture like I was handing them to him. He hadn't consulted with his wife on the purchase and told her he won it in the RO drawing from the match - implicating me in the ruse via the photo! I think that story only lasted a month before the first payment bill came in the mail!"

The ultimate Mr. Fix-it with an eye for detail, Gary was ready for anything. "Gary was one of those guys with 27 hours in a day, and was always looking for things that needed doing," Matthew Fox remembers fondly. "We worked one match, Gary was RM and I was stats. As I walked to my car, Gary was hauling bags of range trash. Part of the range clean up was my car, where he had all but detailed it as he took out all the trash. Miss him..." One of the most touching memories comes from Gary's daughter Lauren, "As he walked me down the aisle at my wedding ten years ago, as he came to the end he opened his suit jacket to flash my husband-to-be his gun in a holster under his arm as he gave me away. Not sure exactly what he said but it was something to the effect of 'you better treat her right or I'm coming for ya!' I was pretty embarrassed at the time, but now I just have to laugh."

On April 13 phones started ringing. Gary had brought the both Florida and New York bands together, and his boating accident left many broken-hearted, most of all Kim and Gary's children and grandchildren. It's a universal saying that shooters are the best people. Like so many we have lost, Gary was living proof of that. Husband, father, grandfather, honorary uncle and friend to many, we will all miss him. ■

**Discover**  
**COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING**  
CELEBRATING AMERICA'S WILD WEST HERITAGE

**WHERE THE WEST CAN STILL BE WON!**

**The Old West Comes Alive with a Membership in SASS®**  
Members Receive a Numbered Shooters Badge, Alias Registration, an Annual Subscription to *The Cowboy Chronicle* and Much More!

**SINGLE ACTION SHOOTING SOCIETY | 877-411-SASS | www.sassnet.com**

**ARIDION**  
powered by P2  
**NOW WITH ARIDION**  
Water Resistant Nano Coating

**EMPOWER YOUR HEARING**

**PLUGS PROTECT YOUR HEARING, BUT DON'T ALLOW YOU TO HEAR YOUR SURROUNDINGS. PLUGS JUST PLUG. EMPOWER YOUR HEARING WITH CUSTOM FIT PROTECTION & HD SOUND.**

**esp**  
electronic shooters protection

303-659-8844 [espamerica.com](http://espamerica.com)  
[@espamerica](https://www.facebook.com/espamerica) [facebook.com/espamerica](https://www.facebook.com/espamerica)