

## Obituary

### Dewaine R. Gahan

One of Oakland's most dynamic leaders, Dewaine Gahan, died on Thursday, Jan. 31, 2008, at the age of 58.

Gahan died of melanoma (skin cancer), a disease he had been battling for almost four years.

Dewaine was born June 23, 1949, in San Francisco, Calif., to Ann (Blaser) and Bob Gahan. He was the second of their nine children. He graduated from Oakland (Nebr.) High School in 1967 and from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1971 (journalism degree).

Gahan's professional journalism career included three years as sports editor of the Holdrege Citizen, six years as sports editor of the Fremont Tribune and 27 years as co-owner of the Oakland Independent and Lyons Mirror-Sun.

He was well known as a columnist, authoring over 4,000 in his career. He was especially recognized in the realm of sports, winning 12 national and 24 state awards for sports-column writing.

Gahan married Uehling-area native Bobbie Engdahl on June 17, 1971, at Elim Lutheran Church. They are the parents of three grown children: Rev. Gregg Gahan, Betsy Bitker and Joe Gahan.

Gahan was state newspaper association president in 1994-95 and honorary state president in 2007-08. He also was president of the Interstate Editorial Association (Nebr., Ia., S.D., and Minn.) and the Northeast Nebraska Press Association. He was co-chairman of the state association's convention committee for 15 years.

Dewaine initiated numerous events or projects, most notably the Oakland Swedish Festival, leading it for eleven years, and the Swedish Basketball Classic, directing it for fourteen years.

His other Oakland activities were: Oakland Chamber of Commerce (president multiple years), Friends of Oakland Foundation (secretary for over 20 years), Oakland Community Development Association (secretary), Swedish Heritage Center (fundraising chairman), tourism director (25 years), Community Improvement Program (chairman), water tower paintings (chairman), community billboards (chairman), and organizer of numerous Oakland visits by international groups.

He brought numerous dignitaries to town, including senators, governors, coaches, congressmen, and Swedish officials. He also organized Oakland banquets featuring such public figures as Nebraska Coach Bob Devaney, Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne, Governor Kay Orr, Swedish Ambassador Anders Thunborg and State Senator Ernie Chambers.

Gahan, an Oakland High athlete, was particularly well known for his sports involvement and leadership.

He organized area athlete-of-the-year programs at the Holdrege and Fremont dailies; organized the Fremont area all-star basketball game in 1976 and subsequently moved it to Oakland as the Swedish Basketball Classic; was a consultant in organizing all-star games in seven other Nebraska communities;

organized and directed for 17 years the Oakland Area Men's Basketball League; organized and directed the Oakland Area Mixed Volleyball League; helped organize the Oakland Purple Gang baseball town team; was an officer for the Dodge County Baseball League; organized a regional baseball league for boys ages 9-14; was an Oakland youth baseball manager for 10 years; twice coached a northeast Nebraska baseball all-star team into the age-group World Series; organized numerous benefit sports events in Oakland; and organized the first alumni basketball tournaments in Oakland.

Gahan was a physical fitness buff and played competitive men's basketball until age 50 and town-team baseball until age 36.

Gahan has been awarded several honors over his lifetime. In 2008, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the Nebraska Schools Activities Association. In addition, several honors were presented to him in 2007. Among them were: first inductee into the Oakland Hall of Fame; inducted into the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame; Nebraska Coaches Association "Media Person of the Year"; athletic directors' association (NSIAAA) "Outstanding Media Award"; honorary lifetime member of the Nebraska Press Association Board of Directors; namesake and first honoree of the Bobbie and Dewaine Gahan Community International Leader Award; and namesake (along with wife, Bobbie) for MVP awards at the Warrior Basket-ball Classic in Fremont.

In 2006, he was honored by the Nebraska Basketball Development Association with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Other state or national honors include: Nebraska State Education Association's "Champion of Education" award; UNO's Andy Award for community service; the Benjamin Fine Award for Community Service, bestowed by the National Association of School Principals; Ak-Sar-Ben/ConAgra community service award (several times); guest on the USS Nebraska submarine; Nebraska Organ Donor award (twice); and an admiralty in the Great Navy of the State of Nebraska.

He also was an officer in the Oakland Lions Club, the Oakland Optimist Club, the Scandinavian Council of Nebraska and Elim Lutheran Church. He taught Sunday School at Elim ("Swaburg Church") for 13 years.

Gahan often was a workshop presenter at newspaper conventions. During his and wife Bobbie's 27-year tenure with the Oakland and Lyons newspapers, they won over 160 state and 30 national newspaper-contest awards.

Survivors include his wife of 36 years, Bobbie of Oakland; sons Rev. Gregg (Jennifer) Gahan of Langford, South Dakota and Joe Gahan of Jackson, Tenn.; daughter Betsy (Chuck) Bitker of Kearney; grandson Elijah Gahan of Langford; mother Ann Gahan of Oakland; brothers Mike Gahan of Scribner, Chris (Annette) Gahan of Lincoln, Glen (Melanie) Gahan of Omaha and Paul (Eileen) Gahan of Seward; sisters Dr. Karen (Bob) Tarnow of Kansas City, Nora (Rick) Eriksen of rural Tekamah, Rita (Roger) Houdersheldt of rural Shelby and Dr. Janice (Ron) Rech of Blair; mother-in-law Lois Engdahl of Fremont; sister-in-law Nancy (Gary) Beard of Uehling; and brother-in-law Karl (Kim) Engdahl of Fremont.

Gahan was preceded in death by infant son Scott, infant daughter Sara and father Bob Gahan.

The funeral was held on Sunday, Feb. 3, 2008, at 2 p.m. at the Oakland-Craig Public School elementary gymnasium. Funeral reception with the family was held after the service at the Vet's Building on Main Street in Oakland Nebraska. Visitation was Saturday, Feb. 2 from 1-5:30 p.m. at Pelan Funeral Home in Oakland. Visitation continued from 6:30-8 p.m. at the First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Oakland, with a prayer service being offered at 7:30 p.m. at the church. A Grave Site Service will be held at Elim Lutheran Cemetery, Swaburg, Neb.

Rev. Mark Eldal and the decedent's son, Rev. Gregg Gahan officiated at the funeral. Burial was in the Swaburg Cemetery, southeast of Uehling.

Memorials may be directed to the Nebraska High School Hall of Fame, Oakland Ball Association, Swedish Festival and the Uehling Ball Park Fund and The Nebraska Press Association Foundation.