



Max Zurko

JAN 22, 1948 - FEB 13, 2025



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Max John Zurko was born in Wilmington, Delaware, the youngest child of Stephen and Anna (Schurko). Like many Northerners, the warm and sunny climate of Florida proved to be alluring to his parents, and when he was 7 years old, they relocated to North Miami with his brother Steve and sister Joyce (Losonsky).

Max attended Madison Junior High school and Edison Senior High, where he participated in activities such as Track and Field. After graduating in 1966 he followed his brother and sister up to Tallahassee to attend the Florida State University, where he began his lifelong pursuit of education, for himself and others. It may surprise some that he also honed his skills as a trapeze artist with the FSU Flying High Circus! It was during this time that he met Sylvia (Beadle), who was also pursuing a degree in Education. After graduation they returned to South Florida. They were married for 11 years, and their son Chad was born in 1976.

Max taught Industrial Arts at several schools including South Broward High, while also working with his father at his jewelry store and honey-selling business. However, he longed to return to the peaceful and natural beauty of Tallahassee. So, during their summer vacations from teaching, he would return there to the plot of land he had purchased, and work on building the A-Frame house where he would eventually settle for the remainder of his days.

In 1982, Max relocated permanently to Tallahassee and began his tenure teaching Industrial Arts at FSU's Developmental Research School, otherwise known as "Florida High." Throughout his 24 years there, he gained love and respect from his students as well as fellow teachers. With his caring yet no-nonsense approach, he taught them practical life skills like changing an electrical outlet or fixing a leaky pipe, as well as drafting and woodworking; skills which sadly are rarely if ever taught now. And to this day, his former students frequently recount the "inspirational" handwritten signs posted around his classroom, with messages like "Shouldas, couldas and wouldas don't count- didyas are the hard currency of life", "Mediocrity is not good 'nuf" and "If you've come to play, go away!"



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His expertise went way beyond carpentry: He was also an avid Civil War buff, and regularly traveled up the east coast to visit historical sites like Gettysburg and attend reenactments of battles. He amassed what is believed to be the largest collection in the world of canteens from that era (and even before.)

He definitely marched to the beat of his own drum and lived life on his own terms. Yet he would never hesitate to do anything he could to help someone in need, while also making sure they learned how to help themselves. Here's to a life well lived! He will be sorely missed.

Max is preceded in death by his parents Stephen and Anna, his brother Steve and nephew Scott. He is survived by his son Chad, sister Joyce, sister-in-law Linda and nieces and nephews Andrea, Natahsa, Nicole, Ryan and Grant.



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Janna McConnell posted:

Max and I had been friends and classmates since Madison Junior High and Edison Senior High in Miami. I corresponded with him not too long before his passing and he told me of his illness. He was a remarkably accomplished and interesting person. I visited him at the house he built in Tallahassee a few years ago and was amazed at the ingenuity. We used to joke about Bear DE and one summer during junior high, he sent me a postcard from there with a Delaware weed taped on. I have so many fond memories of him. and we had great times working on the school newspaper. It was always fun to get together at the Madison reunions in Ocala. I will truly miss him. Rest in peace

April 17 at 9:28 AM



Casey Mahoney posted:

Mr. Zurko was a great teacher and impacted many. He knew there was no way I'd ever do anything in life related to architecture or woodworking, but he was still so patient with me. I still have my little crab bank I made...I was so proud. Rest in peace Mr. Zurko. 🙏

March 21 at 4:11 AM



Alexandriashiryl Moore shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

RIP to the Best Shop Teacher Ever He was a kind-hearted man, always patient, always encouraging. His legacy lives on, not only in his son, Chad Zurko, who carries the same warmth, but in the countless students he inspired. I thought about your dad today as I prepared to stain my dresser—realizing I hadn't done anything like this since high school shop class. I can still hear him: Mr. Zurko: "We're building a box or a birdhouse. You'll cut the wood and stain it." Me: "I can't do it." Mr. Z: "Shiryl, just go slow. Just try it. Staining is just painting the wood—layer by layer for a deeper color. See? Let it dry in between." I remember running into the shop during lunch, eager to get more done. Mr. Z: "Staining again?" Me: "Real quick!" Thank you, Mr. Zurko—for your patience, your kindness, and for teaching us that sometimes, all we need to do is try.



March 18 at 6:26 PM



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William "Bill" Mcwhinney posted:

I was sad to hear the recent passing of my favorite High School teacher, Max Zurko. Mr Zurko's wisdom and humor had a profound effect on me, and who I am as a person. Mr Zurko was an industrial arts teacher but he taught more than Industrial arts. He taught life skills, pride, work ethic, and what it is to be a decent human being. The last time I saw Mr Zurko was in 1979 yet the impression he left on me lasted my entire life. I'm sure he will be dearly missed by his friends, family and former students.

March 9 at 10:38 AM



Jason Raymond posted:

I was wondering what I could say about Mr. Zurko, so I asked myself, "Self, what do you remember most?" The answer is that I remember his sense of humor. I had him for two classes, basic industrial arts in 8th grade, and drafting in 12th. Those were two of the most challenging, and fun, classes I ever had. I learned that tasks that seem impossible can be done if you have the right tools, a good teacher to show you how to use them, and the willingness to put in the work. Those were some of the most valuable lessons I learned in school.

February 22 at 9:22 AM



Chad Zurko February 26 at 9:20 PM

Thank you Jason that made me smile. How could I forget all the times Dad was pondering a question or problem, then would tell me "So I said to myself, self?" followed by whatever critical thought led him to deduce the solution.



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Griff Houck shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

Coffee at my house after church every Sunday. I miss you Max.



February 22 at 7:36 AM

HF **Holly Foley** March 18 at 2:42 PM
Zurko

HF **Holly Foley** March 18 at 2:41 PM
Mr. Murkowski so I say to myself self. See u with the angels rip great man and teacher the best

GH **Griff Houck** February 22 at 7:37 AM
Coffee at my house after church every Sunday. I miss you Max.



Dana Farcas-Jones lit a candle in honor of Max.

You took Max Zurko's Carpentry class thinking it would be an easy class. Instead you found yourself challenged and learning life lessons, that still apply today, and never once with a harsh word. You might get a little sarcasm but that's because Mr. Zurko expected you to think. He was always smiling and positive to his students. The world has truly lost a great person! RIP



February 21 at 10:23 AM



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Robert Dj Smith posted:

As a former Florida High Demon, I now see that there were some real characters on staff. Mr. Zurko was one of the best. I only had him for one carpentry class and one day of detention (which I earned), but I talked to and laughed with him regularly in the school driveway that had the two large magnolia trees. I'd ask him about his van and who was in trouble that day. He never had anything negative to say about the kids that were reporting to detention that day or every day. As a kid I didn't recognize it, but today I'd call him a true optimist. He put a positive spin on everything and his smile was contagious. I specifically remember him telling our class that men clog bathroom drains more than women, with their balding hair and constant stubble. The whole class laughed at how gross, obscure and silly his trivia tidbit was. I am certain that thousands of former students and staff will remember him fondly and eternally. Rest in peace, Mr. Zurko.

February 21 at 9:37 AM



Chad Zurko February 26 at 9:47 PM

Robert, thank you for those touching words which describe my father perfectly. I always tell people I inherited his cynical outlook on life. But along with that I'd like to think he also passed down his inquisitiveness and attempt to understand the way humans behaved, and his sharp wit and sense of humor to throw out a "zinger" then smile, so you felt things weren't really so bad. I never looked at it that way until I read your post.



Media

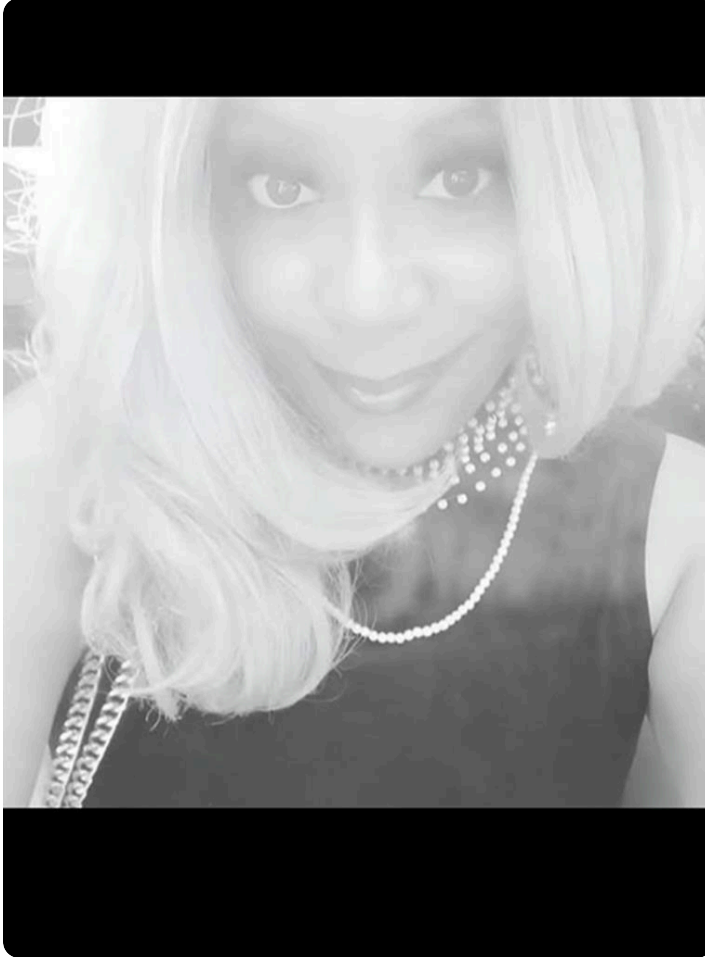
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Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Max by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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