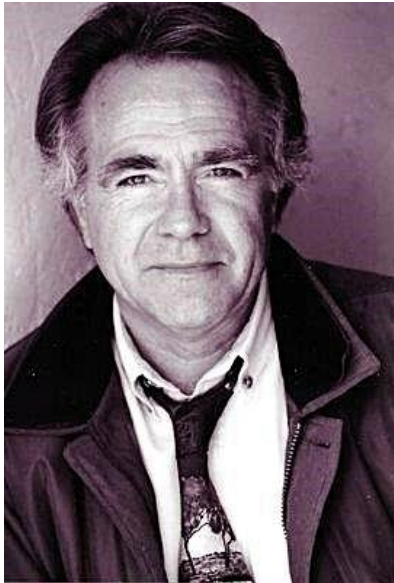


Gary L. Bayer obituary



Gary L. Bayer, 84, a retired Foreign Service officer with USAID, died on March 16, 2026, in Cusco, Peru, surrounded by his family. Mr. Bayer was born on March 8, 1942, near Neenah, Wis. The second person in his family to attend college, he joined his elder brother at Lawrence College in Appleton, Wis., in 1960.

Mr. Bayer began his adventures overseas as a Peace Corps volunteer in Peru (1966–1967).

He joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1967 and served until 1969 as a USAID refugee adviser in Vietnam, where he became adept at learning dialects and developed an appreciation for Southeast Asian cuisine.

In 1970 he married Nelly Arias, his companion for 56 years.

In Laos (1971–1975), Mr. Bayer regularly met with the Crown Prince and the Red Prince for cigars and brandy. He was even captured and held (for a few hours) as a POW by Pathet Lao forces. Luckily, his family recalls, his knack for languages stood him in good stead and he talked himself out of captivity and across the river to safer ground. He was on the last Air America flight out of Laos to Bangkok after the Pathet Lao took control of the country.

Mr. Bayer's next posting was Botswana (1976–1978), where he taught agriculture extension at the Botswana Agriculture College and regularly invited his students to his home on weekends for lunch, lively discussion, and laughter. Serving subsequently in Lesotho (1978–1980) and Bolivia (1980–1984), he would bring along his young son on field trips to project sites, thereby guaranteeing that another Bayer generation would join USAID.

He then served in Panama (1984–1987), the Canal Zone a great assignment for a Wisconsin kid who loved to fish for bass. In Sudan (1988–1990), he would drive across the desert and sail down the Nile, making friends among the locals wherever he went.

Posted to Uganda (1990–1994), he supported the establishment of Lake Mburo National Park and protection of the gorillas of Bwindi National Forest. Sri Lanka was Mr. Bayer's final official USAID assignment (1995–1999). Retirement, however, was short-lived. Mr. Bayer was soon off to Mozambique with World Vision, where he implemented the USAID agriculture portfolio (2000–2008). During this period, he took several epic road trips on the dusty roads of Kruger National Park, Namibia, and beyond.

In 2009 the Bayers settled in Cusco, where he is remembered by a large community of local inhabitants and civic groups who enjoyed his sense of humor, his willingness to lend a helping hand, and his overall love of life.

Mr. Bayer is survived by his spouse, Nelly of Cusco; son, Tom (and spouse, Mariny), and grandson, Cyrus of Biliran Province in the Philippines; and brother, Melvin Bayer of Jensen Beach, Fla.

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