

## Rodney, Sarah, Rachael and Grace Pearson

He was a pillar of a good many Seattle restaurants over the years. She was an outgoing Alaska Airlines flight attendant. They were devoted parents to their two daughters, 6-year-old Rachael and 22-month-old Grace.

For their friends, the loss of Rodney and Sarah Pearson and their girls is painful almost beyond description.

"We're just trying to get through the day," said Tom Church, president of Six Degrees restaurants in Seattle and suburban Kirkland. Rodney Pearson was vice president of operations for Six Degrees, where he was extremely well liked by staff and customers both, he said.



"This has hit a lot of people," Church said. "There's been tears. A lot of managers are on duty today . . . because servers with a lot of history with Rod stayed home."

Pearson, 45, had at least 25 years in the restaurant business, and worked at many well-known restaurants in Seattle.

"He was a person in love with the industry," Church said. "He was hands-on. He met people at the door. He would bus tables. He didn't put himself above anything."

But as much as Pearson loved his work, he always set aside Sundays for his family, Church said. Family always came first, he said.

And if his wife was off flying, he wouldn't hesitate to bring his daughters into work, he said.

"He would be bouncing them on his knee while he trained staff," Church said.

The Pearsons were on a family vacation, traveling on Alaska employee passes. It was their first vacation together in some time, friends said.

Daniel Mitchell IV, chef at Trattoria Mitchell, said he'd known Pearson since the early 1990s.

"It's a terrible thing," Mitchell said. "We go back a ways, Rod and me. He had two little girls, and I have a little girl. . . . it's so scary."

Pearson was loved by those who worked for him, in part because he was never afraid to pitch in to do whatever needed to be done, he said.

"He got his hands dirty and busted butt," Mitchell said. "He was the epitome of the team player."

Bo Bonina, vice president of food and beverages for the Seattle Athletic Club, opened several restaurants with Pearson in 1993. They'd been friends since, he said.

"He was a very good guy, extremely gregarious. He was a devoted family man," Bonina said. "And his wife, she was . . . outgoing and fun."

Rod Pearson was also a talented athlete. He loved cycling and was a former star high school wrestler in Seattle, Bonina said.

Sarah Pearson, 36, whose maiden name was Manning, was from Spokane, he said. Bonina spoke to her father, who was attempting to cope with the loss of the family.

"It's a devastating thing to lose a child, as well as grandchildren and a son-in-law," he said.

The Pearson lived in a tidy clapboard beige-and-white home in Seattle. Next door at a neighbor's house, a note taped to a wreath read "Friends and neighbors come in."

"You'd be surprised at how important they were to this block," said one neighbor at the house who did not give his name.

Source: <http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/past01.shtml>