

## Life on the High Wire

The world's most famous troupe, The Flying Wallendas, has been entertaining audiences since the 1780s. In modern times, they have been known for some of the most daring successes *and* the most tragic losses in the industry.

The family's most famous stunt was the Wallenda Pyramid. Four men were topped by two more men, who were then topped by a girl standing on a chair – all this on a tightrope suspended 35 or more feet above the ground ... with no safety nets! This amazing stunt was performed safely, over and over again, from 1948 until 1962.



On Jan. 30 of that year, while performing at the State Fair Coliseum in Detroit, the front man on the wire faltered and the pyramid collapsed.

Three men fell to the ground, the rear anchorman alone remained standing on the wire. Karl and his brother Herman fell to the wire from the second level. The girl at the top level landed on Karl as he miraculously held her until a makeshift net could be held beneath her.



Two of the three men who fell to the earth died that night. The third, Karl's son Mario, survived, although he is paralyzed from the waist down. The girl suffered a concussion. Karl's injuries included a cracked pelvis and a double hernia.

In the midst of the tragedy, the Wallendas exhibited "the show must go on" tradition in the highest possible manner by performing the very next evening.

"I feel like a dead man on the ground," Karl told his wife. "I can handle the grief better from up there. The wire is my life. We owe it to those who died to keep going."

It was during a promotional walk in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in March 1978 that the patriarch of the Great Wallendas fell to his death at age 75. It wasn't because of his age or capabilities, not because of the wind, but because of several misconnected guy ropes along the wire. Karl once said, "Life is being on the wire, everything else is just waiting."

(more)

The Wallenda legacy lives on to the sixth and seventh generations through Karl's grandchildren and great-grandchildren. That includes his great-grandson, Nik Wallenda, who became the first person to walk a tightrope stretched directly across Niagara Falls on June 15, 2012. On June 23, 2013, he became the first person to high-wire walk across a Grand Canyon-area gorge (crossing the Little Colorado River outside Grand Canyon National Park).



He followed that up on Nov. 2, 2014, by completing two tightrope walks between skyscrapers in Chicago, setting two new Guinness World Records – one for walking the steepest tightrope incline (19 degrees) between two buildings, and the other for the highest tightrope walk while blindfolded. Wallenda performs without a safety net or harness.

The story of the Wallendas raise the question: Are you living *your* life on the wire?

Don't hesitate to fully engage in the life to which God has called you.

*Really* living means accepting the risks that come with being fully involved followers of Christ. Are you willing to love and serve others no matter the cost? Kingdom living is "being on the wire; everything else is just waiting."

Jesus said: *If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for My sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?* (Matthew 16:25 NLT).

– Beecher Hunter