



Gary Kenneth Gilbert

July 4, 2014

Gary Kenneth Gilbert, 81, of Cape Girardeau, July 4, 2014. He was the son of Charles Wooten and Violet Markhart Gilbert, born in the family home on North Middle in Cape Girardeau on February 3, 1933. Family and friends knew him as "Sonny", given to him as a young boy by his mother who exclaimed that, "he was so bright, we had to put a washtub on him to let the sun come up". Sonny grew up in Southeast Missouri, and was a 1951 graduate of Jackson High School and a 1955 graduate of Southeast Missouri State College with an Industrial Arts and Education degree and he lettered 4 years in basketball where fans, and especially opponents, would remember him for his uncanny dribbling skills. He never stopped learning and added a Master of Science degree in Education in 1961 and a Specialist in Education Administration degree in 1971, both from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, IL. While in college, Sonny participated in the Marine Corps Platoon Leaders Class leading to a 2nd Lieutenant Commission upon graduation and achieving the rank of 1st Lieutenant prior to his completion of active duty. He continued in the Reserves and was honorably discharged in 1961. Sonny married Joy Kurka of Cape Girardeau, on October 1, 1955 at Marine Corps Base Quantico - Quantico, VA. Sonny taught industrial arts at schools in Flint, MI, in 1958-59, and Malden, MO, 1959-1965. While at Malden, he founded the Malden Tri-County Trade School. He also coached the Flint Huskies and Malden Greenwave high schools' basketball, football, and baseball teams. In 1965, Sonny moved back to Cape Girardeau and founded the Cape Area Vocational

Technical School, commonly called Cape Vo-Tech. Under his direction, the area benefitted from his founding of many high school and adult education programs at Cape Vo-Tech that continue to be available to everyone today at the current Career and Technology Center. Sonny expanded his influence nationally working on several activities, programs, and committees of the National Vocational Association (NVA) and other state and national education organizations. He served a 4 year term on the NVA Board and as President. Upon retirement in 1992, after 27 years as Vo-Tech director, Sonny continued as a consultant for the Missouri State Department of Education for several years. In 1980, Sonny took up running and quickly became a top competitor in his age group in local and area races including several marathons. He supported the running community with his support of the fledgling Cape Roadrunners Club, running and volunteering for nearly every race, serving in club offices, including President and as a Club Board Member. Sonny was a true fan of the St Louis Cardinals baseball team all of his life and often recalled Dizzy Dean's, Harry Caray's and Jack Buck's play-by-play radio broadcasts. He would quickly name Stan Musial as his favorite player and cherished a replica Musial harmonica from a recent home game giveaway. This favoritism was perhaps tied into the similarities of his and Musial's left-handed play of the outfield and first base. As a young man Sonny had dreamed of a pro baseball career, and while considered an excellent player, he could never quite make the cut in his pro baseball tryouts. Sonny was an avid civil war re-enactor, and participated in re-enacting events all over the country. He was considered an excellent reference and example of authenticity, with authentic clothing and weaponry. In addition, he was self-taught to play the harmonica, fife, and violin for typical period camp entertainment, volunteered for show-and-tell at schools in full uniform and character, and portrayed as an infantryman in the 1993 movie "Gettysburg" in which he would fondly tell of many conversations he had with Sam Elliott (Brig Gen'l John Buford) during many lulls in the movie production. Sonny immersed himself in the study of the history of the American West and the

Indian Wars. For over 30 years he traveled to Montana to commemorate the Battle of the Little Bighorn every June 25th. He supported the Little Bighorn Associates, the Custer Battlefield Museum and Historical Association, Friends of the Little Bighorn Battlefield, and the Order of the Indian Wars. He extended his interest by becoming a National Master Ranger Corps volunteer for 12 years at Little Big Horn, MT, and Fort Bowie, AZ. Since 2002, he contributed countless hours of research for programs that continue to look for true details of the Battle of the Little Bighorn, specifically identifying hundreds of Native American participants and contributing to and documenting accounts. Sonny was the most patriotic person anyone ever knew. His love of country reflected in all he did. His tragic death on July 4th was ironically just after an Independence Day family celebration when he gathered his family annually for talk, songs, and celebration of the flag and country. These celebrations and presentations were famous within his circle of family and friends. In everything he did, he exemplified the saying, "if it's worth doing at all, it's worth doing your best", yet he often humbly repeated that he was a "jack of all trades, master of none". Survivors include his wife, Joy Kurka Gilbert of Cape Girardeau; son Kenneth Dean Gilbert of Cary, NC; daughters Gay and husband Robert Pilsner of Cape Girardeau and Julie and husband Kenneth Becker of Poplar Bluff, MO. Grandchildren on Kenneth's side include Sunny Deshea Gilbert of Ellisville, MO, and Katie Michelle Gilbert of Las Vegas, NV. Grandchildren on Gay's side include Arthur Blake Pilsner and wife Sara, Heidi Pilsner, Alex Wayne Pilsner, Haley Pilsner, and Hannah Pilsner, all of Cape Girardeau. On Julie's side grandchildren include Luke Spencer Becker and Connor Reece Becker, and step-grandchildren include Erika Danielle Becker and husband Daniel Parks and Alison Machelle Becker all of Poplar Bluff. Siblings include sister Betty Rose Gilbert Litzelfelner and Donald Charles Gilbert both of Dallas, TX. Great-grandchildren include Rylie Priggel, Saydi Priggel, and Erin Delaney Parks. Viewing will be held at Ford and Sons Mt. Auburn Funeral Home, 1001 N. Mt. Auburn Rd., Cape Girardeau, MO

from 4:00 to 8:00pm, Tuesday, July 8, 2014, followed by invitation for family and friends to present personal memories beginning at 7:00pm, ending with a military tribute in honor of his patriotism and service to his country. In lieu of flowers, donations are requested to be made in Gary Gilbert's name to, Friends of the Little Bighorn Battlefield, PO Box 636, Crow Agency, MT 59022 (303)-229-8319. Make checks out to "Friends LBH".

Tribute Wall

JS

“ I'm remembering Gary in my prayers and at the altar, trusting that he's at rest 'where the light of God's face shines'. I had the joy of meeting him and Ms Joy when he was characteristically, generously helping a friend move massive quantities of books into storage. I was moved by their generosity, gentleness and love. Ms Joy and their family are especially in my prayers at this time of loss

James Deshotels, SJ - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

PB

“ I work with Ken in Cary and want to say that you and your family are in me and my families thoughts and prayers.

Patrick Barry - October 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

DE

“ We so deeply sorry to hear of your loss. Our hearts, thoughts and prayers are with you during this very sad time.

Darren Kristy and Wyatt Etzler - September 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

TD

“ Mrs. Gilbert and family, So very sorry for your loss. I remember softball games in Jackson with your family and later working at Cape Vo-Tech under Mr. Gilbert's leadership. He was always an inspiration.

Terri Starzinger Dobey - September 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

EM

“ Gary was a true friend to me and a GREAT professional in the Industrial Arts and Vocational Education world. He was always ready and helpful to me as a teacher and fellow vocational director. He certainly left a great legacy with those he had contact and dealings. He will be missed greatly.

Everett Mitchell - September 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JG

“ My deepest sympathies to the family. Gary was more than just a leader he was that person we could all strive to be. I always enjoyed talking to Gary at every family event. I wish I had taken the time to get to know him better. I go to Yellowstone every year and have visited the Battle of The Little Big Horn and have read several books on the subject. Little did I know that my cousin was an expert on the subject. So sorry for your lose.

John Gilbert - August 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

MR

“ Gary was an outstanding advocate for Vocational Education. His efforts positively influenced many lives. We are sorry to hear of his passing.

Marvin Ruehling - August 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

SO

“ I am so sorry to hear your sad news. I didn't personally know Gary but I remember him as a good man. I will keep you in my thoughts and prayers during this very difficult time

Susan O'Connell - August 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

MM

“ It was a pleasure knowing you and reenacting with you in the Holmes Brigade.

Mike Metcalf - August 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JJ

“ Joy, Fowler and I are saddened to hear of the sudden death of your husband, Sonny. Joy, I have dear memories of time spent with you in our youth; even remember when you fell in love with Sonny. Fowler remembers playing basketball with him in college. We both send our love and sympathy to you and your family at this time of great loss. Judith Bader Jones and Fowler Jones.

Judith Bader Jones - August 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

KO

“ My thought and prayers are with your family during this sorrowful time. Kay

Kay Oehl - August 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

SK

“ Gay & Robert, we were saddened to hear of your father's accident and passing. You both are like family and I know your father was an inspiring and wonderful man. May his memories surround you and your entire family during this difficult time.

Staci & David Kombrink - August 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

HB

“ So sorry to hear of the passing of Gary. Joy, you and your entire family are in our thoughts and prayers. Love, Harry & Dorothy

Harry and Dorothy Bertrand - August 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ I am so sad to learn this news. Gary and Bill Stacy coached together in Malden and we were next door neighbors. My sympathy to all.

Jane Cooper Stacy - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JF

“ We are so sorry for your loss.

Julie D. Williams and Family - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

KS

“ Uncle Sonny was always a joy. He will be missed. Kelley Litzelfelner Stephenson

Kelley Stephenson - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

ID

“ Though I did not know Mr. Gilbert, his is somehow a familiar face, perhaps from re-enactments, and his obituary I presents a lively picture of him. For this reason, forgive my boldness in pointing out that dying on July 4 is something such a patriotic man shares with Presidents Adams and Jefferson, who died on that date the same year, and also President Monroe, who died on July 4 several years later. My sympathies to the family for your loss of such a fine man.

Ida Domazlicky - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JW

“ Our condolences to Joy and the family. Such a great loss for all. We are sorry we will not be able to come to the funeral. We are out of town this week. You are in our prayers.

Jack and Barb Watts - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

BM

“ I am so very sorry for your loss. My thoughts and prayers are for you and your family. Barbara

Barbara Mueller - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JZ

“ Uncle Sonny and Aunt Joy have always been my heroes and role models: a HIGH bar for a happy marriage, beautiful example of personal integrity and strong sense of family. I feel honored to be their family! My prayers, thoughts and love go to Aunt Joy, Kenny, Gay, Julie and their families as we celebrate this great life SO well lived!

Jill Zanetti - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

SJ

“ Julie and family, so sorry to hear of your tragic loss. God's Blessing and prayers for you and your family!

Sherry Jerome - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

MG

“ I knew Gary from Civil War reenacting, he was an Awesome person!

Michael Gosser - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

DM

“ In extending our deepest sympathy, Lydia and I were saddened by Gary's passing.

Dale Meier - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JG

“ Joy & family We are so sorry for the loss of Gary, he was a great friend and civil war buddy. We will remember all good times around the camp fires and traveling to camp outs for events for Holmes Brigade and at Jefferson Barracks. Our prayers are with you.

Jack and Maggie Grothe - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

EO

“ So sorry for your loss. You are very fortunate to have so many wonderful memories. I know you will all miss him dearly. Our prayers are with you and your family.

Edie and Richard Oliver - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

WK

“ Joy and Family, I am so sorry for your loss. I'll remember Gary as a fearless and fun CG Road Runner. You are in my prayers.

Wendy (Hager) Kunc - July 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ A big influence on my life - a good man !!!

John Summers - June 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ A big influence on my life - a good man !!!

John Summers - June 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

MG

“ *Pampa, Thank you for everything you ever did for me...which was quite a bit! I have always loved and respected you and love you forever for your beautiful positive influence on Sunny and Katie. Always in my heart...Maggie*

Maggie Gilbert - June 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JV

“ *I am saddened by the loss of this great man and would like to extend my heartfelt prayers and condolences to his family.*

Judy Vickrey - June 07, 2014 at 12:00 AM