



General Raymond Arthur Gilbert

April 19, 1919 - December 28, 2013

RAYMOND ARTHUR GILBERT, Brig Gen, USAF (Ret)

Age 94, a longtime resident of Albuquerque, New Mexico, died Saturday, December 28, 2013, after a short illness. General Gilbert was born in Mattoon, Illinois on April 19, 1919, as the eldest son of Arthur Monroe Gilbert and his wife Reba Pratt Gilbert. He is survived by his wife, Constance B. Young, of Albuquerque. As an Air Force officer, he had several tours of duty in Albuquerque, including serving as the first Director and Commander of the Air Force Weapons Laboratory at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque from 1963 until 1966. He eventually retired permanently in Albuquerque as well.

Loved Ones

In addition to his wife, Constance B. Young, formerly of Eunice, Louisiana, General Gilbert is survived by his oldest son Richard K. Gilbert and his partner, Sallie Strang, of Washington, D.C., by his youngest son, Thomas A. Gilbert and his wife Diana of Bulverde, Texas, and their son Andrew and daughter Naomi; by his younger sister Rose G. Shaw and her children, Linda Warren and her husband John Bush, Pamela Anspach and her husband David, Charles "Chip" Shaw and his wife Barbara, and Sue Van Woerkom and her husband Linn; by his youngest brother, John L. Gilbert and his wife Mary Jean and their children, John Michael Gilbert, Anne Gilbert and her husband Robert Duff, and Carol Gilbert and her fiancée, Joseph Giampetroni, by his sister-in-law, Shirley Virginia Gilbert and by brother-in-law, James Robert Slagle.

General Gilbert is also survived by his stepdaughter Daphne Orner and her husband David, as well as their children, Jonathan Orner and Laurel Christensen and her husband Preston and their daughters Sawyer and London, all of Albuquerque. Preston Christensen, a pastor at Grace Church, will participate in the service.

General Gilbert was preceded in death by his first wife Frances Keith Gilbert of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, his middle son Jack A. Gilbert of Studio City, California, and his younger brother Charles H. Gilbert, and younger sisters, Shirley K. Rekers, Harriet S. Slagle and Janet R. Gilbert.

Education

General Gilbert graduated from high school in Mattoon in 1936 and studied electrical engineering at the university of Cincinnati on a work / study program from 1936 to 1941. He attended Ohio State University from May 1951 until June 1952 where he obtained his Bachelor of Science degree cum laude in 1950 and his Master of Science degree in physics in 1952. General Gilbert also received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Albuquerque in 1967.

Military Service

General Gilbert entered US Army Air Corps as Aviation Cadet , May 29, 1941, graduating on December 27, 1941. He spent all of World War II in Texas, initially as an Instructor Pilot, then as Director of the B-26 Ground School. He also served as the Senior Liaison Officer on Frangible Bullet Project, and then the Officer in Charge of the Research Planning Board of the Army Air Force Central School for Flexible Gunnery.

After the war, General Gilbert had a brief tour at Eglin Field and attended the Military Government School at Carlisle Barracks. He was sent then to Germany in August 1946. He served as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Traffic at the European Air Transport Service. He then served in intelligence posts, first as the Chief, Scientific and Technical Intelligence Branch, at the U.S. Air Force Europe; he was then assigned to the Office of the Director of

Intelligence, for the European Command as the Chief, Projects and Collections Branch. Since he was also a pilot, in 1948, he participated in the Berlin Airlift. He remained in Europe until 1949 when the Air Force sent him to Ohio State University.

After obtaining his Masters degree in 1952, General Gilbert began his long career of his Air Force assignments in the field of research and development, which lasted until his retirement in 1970. He was first assigned as a Nuclear Research Officer, Research Directorate, AF Special Weapons Center, Kirtland AFB. Then in January 1953, he was assigned as theoretical physicist, University of California Radiation Laboratory, Livermore, California. In fall 1954, he proposed a design for a fusion test device; the design was approved and he was selected as the project manager. This device was successfully tested at the Nevada Test Site in March 1955.

He returned to Kirtland AFB on August 1, 1955, as the Chief, Analysis Division, and later as Director, of the Research Directorate. In December 1958, he was assigned as the Deputy Commander, Sciences, Office of Scientific Research, US Air Force Headquarters. There he helped organize the Air Force Research Division of the Air Research and Development Command and in January 1960 became the Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations and later Chief of Staff of that Division. He remained Chief of Staff when the Air Force Research Division became the Office of Aerospace Research with the establishment of the Air Force System Command on April 1, 1961. In July 1961 he became the Air Force member of the Director's Staff Group and later Military Assistant to the Deputy Director, Research and Information in the Office of the Director of Defense Research and Engineering, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

On May 1, 1963, he returned to Kirtland AFB as the first Director and Commander of the Air Force Weapons Laboratory and served in that position until September 1966. During that period, The Air Force Weapons Laboratory received two consecutive Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards.

In September 1966, he became Vice Commander, Research and Technology Division, Air Force System Command. In April 1967 that Division was combined with the office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Research and Technology in Headquarters Air Force Systems Command to form the office of the Director of Laboratories and he was named Director. In that position he had line responsibility for all US Air Force basic and applied research organizations and staff responsibility for all of the Air Force's research and technology programs. He served in that position until his retirement. He retired July 31, 1970 as a Brigadier General with 4200 hours flying time and 30 years military service; 28 years of which involved science and engineering, including 18 years in research and development.

His military awards include the Air Force Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Force Commendation Medal, and the Army Commendation Medal. Also while Director of the Air Force Weapons Laboratory, the laboratory received two consecutive Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards.

Post-Retirement Contributions

After his retirement, from August 1970 to November 1971, General Gilbert was the Deputy to the Executive Secretary, National Aeronautics and Space Council, in the Executive Office of President. In December 1971, he became Vice President and later President of NRDC, a small corporation of scientists and engineers providing technical advice and management services to federal, state and local governments and to business and industrial concerns. In 1974 and 1975, he was a staff member of the Commission on Critical Choices for Americans under the chairmanship of Nelson A. Rockefeller. He assisted Dr. Edward Teller in preparing a report to the President on a national energy policy for the remainder of that century. In 1976, he volunteered to assist in the preparation of New Mexico's response to Request for Proposal from the U. S. Energy Research and Development Administration for a National Solar Energy Research Laboratory. Then in 1977, he was selected to

head a group to prepare a proposal from the 13 Western states, including Alaska and Hawaii, for a regional organization to encourage the use of solar energy. In 1978, he was asked to be the first Executive Director of Western SUN that resulted from that report. In April 1979, General Gilbert decided to return to Albuquerque and to go into semi-retirement. He later served briefly as a consultant to the University of New Mexico Engineering Research Institute.

He was a life member of the Air Force Association, the Retired Officers Association, the National Association for the Uniformed Services, and the American Legion. Locally, he was active in the Order of the Daedalians, a professional society for military pilots.

Services

Services will be held Monday, January 13, 2014, at 10:00 a.m. at Grace Church of Albuquerque, 6901 San Antonio Drive, NE, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87109. A military burial service will be conducted at 2:15 p.m. at the Santa Fe National Cemetery, 501 North Guadalupe Street, Santa Fe, New Mexico. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Wounded Warrior Project, at woundedwarriorproject.org or at P.O. Box 758517, Topeka, KS, 66675.

Cemetery Details

Santa Fe National Cemetery

501 N. Guadalupe St.
NM 87504

Previous Events

Services

JAN **13**. 10:00 AM (MT)

Grace Church
6901 San Antonio Dr. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109

Tribute Wall

MB

“ *Margo Billeaudeaux lit a candle in memory of General Raymond Arthur Gilbert*



Margo Billeaudeaux - February 07, 2014 at 02:19 PM



“ *Ray Gilbert was one of the dearest friends I ever had in my life and I will miss him the rest of my life. Even after his dear wife, Fran- who was like a sister to me- died , and we left New Mexico, he remained close. His precious Connie was such a blessing in his life. She brought him so much joy after Fran's tragic loss. He profoundly influenced both of my children and encouraged both me and my husband through good times and bad. I was blessed to have known him. Heaven is richer because he is there with my precious Bill. Bless you, Ray.*

Cynthia Matthews, Lexington, KY

Cynthia Matthews - January 16, 2014 at 07:20 AM

CY

“ Dear Connie,

We offer our sincere sympathy and regret that we are out of state and can not be with you at this sad time. We would like to be there to honor Ray on Monday, but sadly can not attend. I was assigned to the Air Force Materials lab when General Gilbert was the director of Labs and I knew of him, but did not know him. In 1968, I was assigned to the Weapons Lab and was exposed to the wonderful mission and culture that General Gilbert began there. Then we were privileged to be at your wedding and got to know the General personally and what a wonderful person he was. He asked us to call him Ray and we tried, but he will always be the General to us. He was the epitome of a gentleman from the time we met him until the last time we saw him over dinner. We felt honored that you both introduced us to Chens, that you could attend our Christmas Eve Birthday celebrations and we could join you at Air Force Association parties over the years. To be reading physics books at the age of 92 to keep alert was amazing. We have had several champagne toasts with you and so we want, one more time, to toast a wonderful man and his gracious wife. We love you both and send our prayers for Ray's eternal life and for your health and comfort in knowing that you had a terrific life together

With sincere Sympathy, Carol and Bill Yarnall

Car

carol yarnall - January 12, 2014 at 03:38 PM

JB

“ Ray was the Commander when I came to the Weapons Lab just out of graduate school. He spent several hours with me over the first few days and then told me to take two or three weeks to look over all the Lab activities and decide where I wanted to work. This was quite different from the Air Force I knew as an operational pilot. I think we had a bond from the beginning, as he was a pilot too, and there were not many in the scientific staff of the Lab. Our paths crossed in Washington a few times as we each were working in Research and Development. Later, we both landed in Albuquerque permanently and built on our friendship at Daedalians and other activities. Ray and Connie's and Diane and my homes are less than a mile apart. I respected Ray from the moment we met. Over the years, my respect grew for him as an individual and scientist deeply interested in physics while maintaining an unflinching belief in a Higher Power. He will be missed.



John Bode - January 11, 2014 at 03:54 PM

BL

“ Ray and Ed Giller changed my life. Ray, Ed, Lt.Col Dave Jones, Maj. Lew Allen, and Capt Jasfer Welch made me a member of the Nuclear Mafia. We are freinds to this date. My condolences to Connie and Ray's two sons Richard and Tom.

Bill Lehmann - January 09, 2014 at 05:40 PM

JN

Connie, Richard, Tommy, & Families - AND United States Air Force Extended Family of Heroes -

I can't see through my tears! I told Cliff it tears my heart wide open to lose my own personal heroes - heroes to our whole country and to the ENTIRE WORLD! Thank you ALL, together and alone, for saving this world for generations yet unborn that you never knew before their coming when you saved us all! AND for continuing that protection for decades afterward!

It is too sad, but then I think how incredibly fortunate and blessed I am to know this pain and loss on a personal basis! Not many have the extreme honor, privilege, and blessing of knowing and loving these GIANTS Among All Men and their families, and receiving their encouragement, respect, and love - light years before even coming close to earning it!

I will be forever grateful for the times we all spent together in DC, at Hatteras, in ABQ, and in the gorgeous mountains of San Juan National Forrest in Colorado! I am so glad that I came to see Ray & Connie every time I possibly could when visiting in ABQ, the last visit being in March, 2012. Ray & Connie said "Come on over!", and he gave me his signature Bear Hug still so strong at 92 that it could break my ribs if he didn't restrain himself!

Love and Christ's Blessings Always and Forever - Jody Lehmann Nelson

Jody Lehmann Nelson - January 11, 2014 at 01:59 PM



“ *Blue & White Sympathy Basket was purchased for the family of General Raymond Arthur Gilbert.*



January 09, 2014 at 01:34 PM

CS

“ *The departure of Uncle Ray leaves a hole that will never be filled. Blessings to Connie, all of the family and friends. We thank the Lord for allowing Ray to be a part, yes a huge part, of our lives. Chip, Barb Shaw and family.*

Chip Shaw - January 07, 2014 at 06:16 PM



“ *A sympathy card was purchased for the family of General Raymond Arthur Gilbert.*



January 07, 2014 at 12:42 PM

BH

“ *It was an honor to have you for my friend. Bob Hudson, Colonel, USAF (ret)*



BOB HUDSON - January 07, 2014 at 10:59 AM

RC

“ *Our most heartfelt condolences to Connie and all the family. Ray Cohen, Cathy Good & Suzi Cohen*



Ray Cohen - January 06, 2014 at 04:14 PM

ML

“ *Lighting a candle to the memory of Ray*



MB Leaf - January 06, 2014 at 03:25 PM

JP

“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family, Connie. We have all lost a great friend.*

Jane and Dan Payton - January 06, 2014 at 10:28 AM

DE

“ *We will always remember Gen Gilbert for his support of a group of junior officers in sponsoring the Science, Philosophy and Religion Symposia of the late 1960s. They were ground breaking events for the Air Force. Rest in Peace Sir. Dave Ericson, LtCol, USAF(Ret)*

Dave Ericson - January 05, 2014 at 10:31 PM

MB

“ *MARIAN MCLEOD BENNETT lit a candle in memory of General Raymond Arthur Gilbert*



MARIAN MCLEOD BENNETT - January 05, 2014 at 11:15 AM

MB

“ *My deepest sympathy to the Gilbert family and to his wife and family. My thoughts and prayers are with you all. General Gilbert was a great and kind man. Wonderful smile and laugh. He will be deeply missed. All my love, Marian Mcleod Bennett*

MARIAN BENNETT - January 04, 2014 at 05:06 PM

TJ

“ *On behalf of the French Family of Companies, we express our deepest condolences.*

Tom Jordan - January 03, 2014 at 11:07 AM