



Gilbert Klemme Bovard

July 31, 1927 - November 23, 2020

Gilbert Klemme Bovard, age 93, of Clear Lake, Iowa, passed away on November 23, 2020 due to complications of the Covid virus. He practiced law in Mason City, IA for 31 years. In 1983 he was appointed to the Iowa District Court and served on the bench for 22 years retiring in 2005. The Honorable G. K. Bovard enjoyed every minutes of his judicial service.

He was born in Pasadena, California in 1927 to Gilbert Simpson Bovard MD and Ruth Klemme Bovard. His grandfather, William Bovard, was the Secretary General of the United Methodist Church. His paternal great uncles, Marion McKinley Bovard and George Finley Bovard, were the first and fourth presidents of the University of Southern California. Gil's father contracted tuberculosis, which in 1930 had no effective treatment, so at age 3 it was believed safer for Gil to live with his maternal aunt and uncle Ralph & Jessie Stanbery in Mason City, Iowa. He saw his biological father once more before Dr. Bovard died in 1936. Gil graduated with honors from Mason City High School (MCHS) in 1945, served at the Great Lakes Naval Station, and attended the University of Minnesota 1946-7; he remained a Gopher fan all his life. He completed his undergraduate education at Pomona College in California in 1949. He played football for the Pomona "Sage Hens" and was an extra in the John Derek film "Saturday's Hero". He attended law school at the University of Iowa from 1949-51, married Eugenia "Genie" Ouren Ulvestad and returned to Mason City to practice law. They raised four children who in turn graduated from MCHS between 1971-76.

Gilbert was a Methodist lay minister, a member & president of the Lion's Club, the Masonic Temple, president of the MCHS School Board for 12 years, and received the class of 1945 Distinguished Alumni Award in 2003 for his community service. In receiving the award, he said: "Be proud of what you do and the way you do it; be true to yourself and you will fail no man."

Gil was nicknamed The Old Crow, as long-time editor of the Clear Lake Yacht Club (CLYC) newsletter "From the Crow's Nest". He was an accomplished sailor, served as a race judge and as commodore of the CLYC. He played flute in the Mason City Meredith

Wilson Band with wife Genie accompanying on glockenspiel! He made elaborate stained-glass windows and had a photographic darkroom. Gil was an Eagle Scout & an Air Scout, and piloted small aircraft into his 60's. He admired his son Doug who flew Cobra helicopters as a US Army Warrant Officer.

Gil was an outstanding athlete. He earned his black belt in judo at age 40. He played rugby on the River City State Championship team in 1981 with men half his age, continued competing until he was 55 and then refereed until he was 60. With nothing else to do, he picked up ice hockey as a goalie in the men's over age 30 league and played until age 78. He wind-surfed 6-wks after a knee replacement, and rowed in a single-shell scull on Clear Lake most summer mornings 5:30-6:30 am until nearly age 80.

At age 72, he swam in the 1999 US Masters Swimming National Championships at the U. of Minnesota Aquatic Center and teamed with his three sons to place 9th in the 200-meter medley relay [under 60 age division!] swimming the final freestyle leg. He was a top-five finisher in several events at the Canadian national swim meet in Toronto in 2003. He skied and completed the 50-kilometer American Birkebeiner Nordic ski race twice training only on the flat Iowa terrain. His doctor once said: "Gil, there are some guys in their 70's who are 90, and others who are physiologically 50. You're 48."

Judge Bovard was a wordsmith, an inspiring orator, and an intimidating debater. He was a maestro of the cribbage board. He loved to recite "The Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll and Kipling's "The Ballad of East & West". He had difficulty saying "I love you" out loud, but always signed his letters "Love, Dad" or "Hang by yer thumbs" which was his euphemism for the same thing. As his children headed off to college, he began to write a multi-page epistle that he named "The Blatt" ("a newspaper" in British parlance) on yellow legal paper every Sunday night for nearly 40 years.

Dad savored life... but he was ready for the next journey. On November 23rd, at the hour he used to rise to go rowing at dawn, he slipped his mooring and set sail for that distant unknown shore. He was an exemplar of the life well lived. Life is tenuous; live without regrets: "One breath in, one breath out...that is all we be."

Judge G. K. Bovard was preceded in death by his dear wife Genie. He is survived by his children Ralph Bovard (Marnie Wells) -Minneapolis, MN, Sally [Bovard] Tye (Joe) -Solon, IA, Doug Bovard (Victoria) -Show Low, AZ, & Scott Bovard (Laura) -Missoula, MT, and grandchildren Annie Tye, Doug Tye, Gillian Bovard & Andrew Bovard (Ashley) and great grandchildren Ella & Torunn Bovard.

A celebration will be held in the future when all can gather safely. Memorials to:

- ☐ The Gilbert & Eugenia Bovard Scholarship: c/o Education Foundation of Mason City Public Schools, 1515 S. Pennsylvania Ave, Mason City, IA 50401
- ☐ Clear Lake Enhancement and Restoration Project: (641) 357-2200: www.clearproject.net
- ☐ Clear Lake Sailing Center: (641) 357-8001- www.clycss.com/donate/
- ☐ Clear Lake Arts Center: (641) 357-1998; www.clearlakeartscenter.org/support/donate

A special thank you to his home caregivers, the Country Meadows staff, and the Mercy Hospital 5W nurses & physicians who cared for him in his final days. Bless you all!

“Men do not quit playing because they grow old;
they grow old because they quit playing.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Comments



“ Reading the article on Mr.Bogarde reminded me of a story from long ago. As Boy Scout in the 1960's, we camping out in the woods, sitting around the campfire . All of sudden from out of the woods I swear it was Paul Bunyan. Flannel shirt, big boots, and carrying a axe. He told a spooky story about a boy named Defargo. After scaring all of us h disappear as fast as he showed up. Truly one of a kind— John and Ginny Cahalan

John Cahalan - February 28, 2021 at 02:09 PM



“ Our condolences on the loss of your father. Amazing man that touched so many of our lives. Remembering him now brings a big smile to my face.
Tom and Toni Merfeld

Tom Merfeld - December 09, 2020 at 09:45 AM



“ My deepest condolences to the Gil Bovard family on the loss of an extraordinary American, and human being. He lived an amazing life. Many, many, many moons ago I met Gil when I enlisted in his Judo classes. The lessons I learned from his coaching techniques was that Judo is more than a sport - it is a way of life based on eight core values: Friendship, Honor, Respect, Modesty, Politeness, Courage, Self-control, and Sincerity. Talking negatively, especially about team-mates or training partners was a major breach of his decorum. From my personal experience with Gil I discovered he was a humble and sincere person which was uncommon, even rare today. And being humble is a sign of a person who is not concerned about his ego but concerned about other people. A great man has left this earth but will forever be in our hearts.
May my condolences bring you comfort and may my prayers ease the pain of this loss.

Leonard Foster

Leonard Foster - December 06, 2020 at 10:17 PM



“ I was at WL&B as a high school senior part of the MCHS on the job training program. When I heard about his death, I vividly recalled a cold snowy Iowa morning. After trudging through the snow, we hearty women were working. Suddenly the elevator doors opened and out stepped Mr. Bovard having come into the office by skis!

Also I think he was the one who had coffee from one day saved and put into a coffee pot to drink the next day. Strong stuff.

Reading life made me realize that he was a unique person! RIP!

Mary Jo Bernemann - December 06, 2020 at 10:10 PM



“ We are so terribly saddened to see the passing of this incredibly good man. Gil (and the lovely Genie) were my neighbors at the lake for about about 15 years and I will always feel lucky to have known them. I knew he was a great guy, but really had no idea the extent of his talents and accomplishments. I had often seen him at dawn, rowing silently across the lake. On Sunday evenings, we would see him arriving at the ice arena for hockey practice just as the kids were finishing figure skating lessons. He carried a huge bag full of goalie stuff and always refused help with it. He had a beautiful Sheltie named RobRoy that he adored. Once when my older daughter was about 8 or 9 years old he graciously took her to work with him to see what a Judge did all day (a lot). The last time we spent any real time together, he gamely agreed to come along on my second date with my (now) husband, Hal. We were going to the last Outlaws hockey game of the 2007 season, I invited Gil along and we all had a great time! I married and moved away shortly after that, but he has crossed my mind regularly over the years. Smart, kind, interesting and always engaged in the moment, he will be missed by all. Gil was the living definition of a 'renaissance man'. He was a gift to us all and my deepest sympathies go to his wonderful family and his many, many dear friends. ♡

Jackie Lowry Hofman
Louisville, KY

Jackie Lowry Hofman - December 06, 2020 at 01:26 PM



“ I had the the pleasure of working with Judge Bovard at the then Laird, Burington, Bovard & Heiny Law Firm from November, 1965 until he left the firm to begin serving the Second Judicial District of Iowa as a District Court Judge. I had the distinct honor of accepting the Governor's call offering him the Judgeship. He was a truly remarkable man. I have many wonderful memories of times and experiences we shared over the years. Sue Foy

Sue Foy - December 06, 2020 at 12:44 PM



“ Ralph, Sally, Doug, and Scott: Our condolences on the loss of your dad. My wife and I have warm memories of Gil. I played rugby with him many years ago, and we fondly remember the ski trips, long ago, to Telemark. We are aware of his community service, and remember him as a very nice and decent man. My dad knew of your father's commitment to education when they both served on Mason City's school board. Both my parents thought highly of your parents. They valued the friendship and enjoyed the ski trips and trips through the organizations they served. What a great legacy for all of you! Thoughts are with you.
Bill Murray

Bill Murray - December 06, 2020 at 09:18 AM



“ Gil Bovard was my first judo sensei. Through our judo practice, he and guys like Hal Lubbert, Chuck Harris and Howie Shepherd opened up a whole new way of looking at life and the world to me. The last time I saw Gil was in the 80s on the hockey ice.

John Weaver - December 05, 2020 at 08:00 AM



“ He was a wonder man. May his Memory be Eternal

Kim Kantaris - December 04, 2020 at 01:53 PM



“ All,
Gil married myself and my second wife.
The fact that Gil married us is more important than the marriage, as it ended. He was my friend.
He is/was a true gentleman.
I thought I knew Gil, after reading The obituary I had very little knowledge of his worldly accomplishments, we should all strive to live life as fully as Gil.
Because clearly a life lived!

Cheers!
Billy the WCB

william bielefeld - December 03, 2020 at 10:33 PM



“ Judge Bovard could straighten out a convoluted mess quickly and with grace and wit. He possessed a sense of humor that helped keep things in perspective in court. One of the hand full of best judges I was honored to appear before. RIP. Max E. Kirk

max e kirk - December 03, 2020 at 12:20 PM



“ One of “ if not” Mason Cities finest ever. Incredible And accomplished human being that helped my family and myself through tough times and reeked of integrity. We lost a truly great one! Condolences to the whole family! RIP YOUR HONOR! .

John McCollum - December 02, 2020 at 10:02 PM



“ "The Judge" did a lot of impressive things. One of the most important, yet under reported of his accomplishments, however, were the skull sessions held in the steam room of the Mason City YMCA. For 20 or 30 years, the place to be at noon was the steam room. Dick Winga, Lynn Scharlau, Jerry Anderson, Don Berry, Gary Howell and I would gather to solve all problems big and small. The thing that impressed me was "The Judge" could argue either side of the issue. Influencers in my life have been my father, Gil Bovard and Soc Pappajohn. I miss them all.
Bob Johnson

Bob Johnson - December 02, 2020 at 05:59 PM



“ My heart felt condolences to the Bovard family.
Mr. Bovard was a man I was glad to have met.

I went to school with Scott and knew Doug, seeing their dad at different events over the years.

A bad car accident, I was in need of a lawyer and I sought out Mr. Bovard. I got more than his legal mind I also got his personal advice and conversations and I was able to overcome injuries faster than medical doctors thought possible. He was a direct spark to my mind whenever I had doubts and over the years I would see him around town and he'd ask me how I was doing, saying keep it up, you can succeed.

I was able to excel and one day at the post office Mr. Bovard approached me and said "hey, I have been reading about you in the newspaper! I told you you'd make it!" I smiled while saying...thank you sir. (but) YOU deserve a lot of credit.

Rest in peace Mr. Bovard

Chris Thenhaus

CT - December 02, 2020 at 05:06 PM



“ I had the pleasure of knowing and taking care of Gil Bovard for many years. I can honestly say it was my favorite times that I've had since moving to the community is 2011. Gil was always such a joy to be around. He has taught me so many life lessons and even how to play cribbage. He will always be missed and never forgotten. May he Rest In Peace now with Genie whom he always spoke of so highly!

Chelsea Korf - December 02, 2020 at 03:55 PM



“ He was one of the kindest gentleman I ever met. I had the pleasure of working with him when he was a Judge in the 2nd Judicial District. I will never forget his smile and those twinkling eyes. Many, many memories. Jill Wilhelm

Jill Wilhelm - December 02, 2020 at 02:41 PM



“ Gil always had time to help others -- especially young folks entering the legal field. I'll always be thankful for Gil taking time to write a recommendation letter for me that undoubtedly helped me get into the Iowa law school. To a life well lived!

-Spencer Anderson

Spencer Anderson - December 02, 2020 at 11:15 AM



“ Gil and I, and Judge Mackey and Will Keen, paddled the Cedar and Upper Iowa on a couple spring weekends," not too long ago." We camped out and shared stories with drinks just beyond the firelight. Gil and I overturned on the Upper Iowa and were swept under trees by the undertow, but no problem, much more life to live after we dried out and retrieved cameras and gear. Godspeed, partner. John Duffy

John L. Duffy - December 02, 2020 at 10:30 AM



“ Judge Bovard was always willing to give sage advice to a young lawyer in need of guidance. Whenever I had a difficult decision to make I would always seek him out and he was generous both with his time and advice, and it always ended with a story or two, about his children or his many interests. A life well-lived. Mark Young, Mason City.

Mark Allen Young - December 02, 2020 at 06:31 AM



“ I took both the Iowa Bar Exam and the Nebraska Bar Exam in 1992 as Plan A and Plan B. We received the results of the Iowa Bar in 2 days. I learned I passed the Nebraska Bar in the fall of 1992. I needed a judge to swear me in for the Nebraska Bar.

Judge Bovard was kind enough to do it. I asked him if he had any advice for a new puppy lawyer. His advice, "Always shine your shoes."

I later I sought out Judge Bovard on a Probate question I had. After thoroughly answering my questions and working through the legal particulars of the situation with me, Judge Bovard had the following advice with a twinkle in his eye, "Jim there's a book I want you to read sometime. It's called the Iowa Code of Law. It will come in handy."

Thank you Judge Bovard!!!! God's Blessings,

Jim Fitzsimmons

Jim Fitzsimmons - December 03, 2020 at 11:56 AM



“ Gil was in my class at Mason City High School, graduating in 1945. My husband Jerry Lindsay, went through Monroe Jr. High as well. He talked about what a great athlete Gil was. We had many class reunions to reminisce of school days. We both lived in Clear Lake for many years, and my granddaughter, Denise Lindsay, was a caretaker for several years.

God Bless all of you.

Katie Lindsay

Kathryn Lindsay - December 04, 2020 at 09:42 PM



“ Sensei Bovard had a black belt in Judo. When I was about 13 or 14 he gave us new to judo plenty of lessons in judo and life in general. He was a fine man.

Joe - December 05, 2020 at 05:18 AM



“ Judge Bovard was my favorite sailing opponent, and it was never much of a surprise to be beaten by that Buzzard's Bay Y-boat with the cream-colored sails.

He was, in the 1960s, the only adult I knew who had read and appreciated the Lord Of The Rings trilogy, and I used to hail him as Gwaihir, chief of the great eagles of the Misty Mountains.

Hail and farewell, windlord.

Fair winds and following seas.

Joel J. Hanes

Joel J. Hanes - December 08, 2020 at 10:08 AM



“ Dear Bovards,

My sincere sympathy at the passing of your Dad. He was a classmate of my father so I knew a bit about him before I met his children - who were classmates of the O'Leary girls. (Aren't these connections one of the best parts of MC?) Anyway, when I was 16, your Dad just about drown me during my WSI final test when he grabbed me and we sunk to the bottom of Roosevelt pool...awaken lizard brain! I somehow got both of us to the surface and he passed me...with a grin. I used to lifeguard at the old men's Y pool and he would swim laps with such vigor at noon! I also think that as president of the school board, he had a hand in awarding me a scholarship that helped make it possible for me to attend a good university. I suspect that while working behind the scenes he helped many young people. I hope you enjoy hearing stories about your Dad that you probably never knew of and I hope they bring a smile. Molly O'Leary

Molly Hatfield - December 22, 2020 at 12:21 AM



“ Molly, I also have fond memories of the O'Leary girls.

Bob Johnson

Mr. Johnson to you.

Bob - December 27, 2020 at 12:17 PM