

Gilbert William Low

Died: July 15, 1979

Gil's death must have brought an "oh no" moment to most of us hearing or reading about it for the first time over 30 years ago. He died at the age of 40 on Sunday, July 15, 1979 from injuries he sustained in an automobile accident in what accounts of his passing said was "a remote area of Mexico." His wife Uta who was with him received minor injuries.

If there was anyone destined to become a "loyal son of Dartmouth" it was Gil. An article about him in the February 1961 issue of The Alumni Magazine says his father was in the Class of 1930, his brother graduated in 1954, his great grandfather was Class of 1857, his great-great grandfather the Class of 1819, and his great-great-great grandfather attended Dartmouth in 1783-84.

Gil was "our" Rhodes Scholar. His academic career at Dartmouth was luminous. He was Phi Beta Kappa. During his sophomore and junior years he was a Rufus Choate Scholar. He was a government major, and in the government department's honors program.

When he was a senior, Gil reflected on his academic successes. "Intellectually college should not be work," he is quoted as saying in the Alumni Magazine article. "A student should enjoy his courses, not solely for the mark to be gained, but for the stimulus each course can provide." If he had one regret, he said, it was that he confined his studies in one area, in his case the social sciences, wishing instead that he'd taken more courses in the humanities and sciences.

He was in Casque & Gauntlet and Green Key, and served on the sophomore orientation and dormitory committees. He played soccer his freshman year. For four years he was in the Christian Science organization, becoming its president his senior year. He was a member of Alpha Theta fraternity.

Gil grew up in Summit, New Jersey, where he went to high school. He was on the student council there and in the honor society, on the yearbook and in the glee club, band, and dramatics. He was on the soccer and tennis teams.

After Dartmouth and on his Rhodes scholarship, he went to Magdalene College at Oxford, taking a second bachelor's degree there in 1963. His obituary in The Alumni Magazine (written by our classmate John Starr) records that Gil then worked for Morgan Guaranty Trust Company in New York and Paris, becoming a vice-president. Along the way, he spent a year with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

John writes that Gil resigned in 1971 to go to the Sloan School of Management at M.I.T. where he earned in Ph.D. in 1977 and remained as an assistant professor, a position he held at the time of his death. At the time, his research interests, said John, included “applying sophisticated quantitative methods to problems of management and developing a system for evaluating alternative economic policies.”

Gil liked to sing. He was in the glee club all four years at Dartmouth and its president his senior year. He sang with the college’s celebrated nine-person ensemble, The Injunaires (now renamed “The Dartmouth Aires”). Between the two groups, Gil reportedly spent nearly 15 hours weekly in rehearsals.

People who like to sing are different. Their voice is their instrument, and of necessity they learn to communicate and interact well with others. A conversation with them can reflect a subtle presence, a joy in talking and listening. The author recalls one such occasion talking with Gil for probably two hours as we stood very late one night on North Main Street in front of Alpha Theta our senior year. Whatever we talked about is long forgotten, but the memory of our enjoyable conversation remains. Gil was thoroughly engaging, very smart, positive, and interested in everything.

John Starr closes his October 1979 obituary for Gil with these words: “In Gil, there was intellectual brilliance as well as a gentleness of spirit and geniality. It was this unique combination of qualities that made Gil equally suited to a career in the business world or in academia, as demonstrated in his highly successful, if equally brief careers in banking and in research and teaching. To lose a friend is always tragic. To lose a friend at the point when he had just begun to fully realize his tremendous potential is an especially poignant tragedy. It is this sense that we who survive Gil share upon hearing of his death.”