

# In Memory

## In Memory: Gilbert Canter Bowen, 1919 - 2012



It is with sadness that I report the passing of Gil Bowen. He was born in Washington, DC, on September 12, 1919. He attended the University of Maryland and graduated in 1942 with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry.

Gil had a very interesting career. His first job was with Celanese in

Cumberland, Maryland, where he did research and performed chemical analyses. After a year, he went to work for the George Washington University at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Indian Head, Maryland, where he participated in the development of rockets. After several months, he was transferred to the Allegany Ballistics Laboratory (ABL) in Cumberland, Maryland, where the emphasis was on rocket research. When World War II ended, he took a job as a chemist for General Aniline & Film Company (GAF), but he never reported. He was metaphorically hijacked by a Pentagon general and sent to Utah to work for the Chemical Corps at the Dugway Proving Grounds, about 85 miles southwest of Salt Lake City, where he worked on mortars and recoilless mortars. When the program began to phase out, he took a job at the famous Naval Ordnance Laboratory in nearby White Oak, Maryland, developing guided projectiles. His expertise in weapons development resulted in his management of eight to ten Navy laboratories. He oversaw more than 500 programs which entailed developing quick response solutions for the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

In 1948 on a blind date, he met Florence Ann Wright, a nursing student at the University of Maryland in Baltimore. They were married on June 16, 1951 at Old

Drawyers Church in Odessa, Delaware. On June 16, 2011, they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

During the course of his career, Gil received two patents. The first, on September 5, 1961, was for a “high velocity, fin stabilized projectile, rifled barrel gun system.” The second was on August 4, 1964, for a “safe biological or chemical warfare projectile.” He assigned both patents to the United States of America.

After retiring in 1976, Gil returned to the University of Maryland and earned another Bachelor of Science degree—this time in psychology. Despite being the father of three, the grandfather of nine, and the great grandfather of three, Gil found time to work with troubled kids who needed help.

Both he and Flo Ann loved to entertain, to travel, and to work in their garden. Gil was interested in computers, stamps, coins, glass in general, and “glass chickens” in particular; and they had season tickets to University of Maryland athletics. But he was especially proud of his many azaleas. Located not far from Brookside Gardens, Gil went to great lengths to protect his garden from the deer which were a major regional problem. Gil and Flo Ann joined the Brookside Gardens chapter in 1985 and participated in all of the chapter activities. In addition to attending chapter meetings, Gil particularly enjoyed exhibiting his azaleas in the annual chapter flower show, and Flo Ann helped with the judging process.

In the prepared remarks for her father’s eulogy, Vicky described her father’s legacy as “a passionate love for life coated with a youthful energetic spirit.” Gil loved his family, his friends, and the pursuit of new experiences.

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