



**“Ted” Gilbank, Lt Col, ret’d. aka “Gil”, Sir, Dad, Grandpa  
Cdn Forces Decoration w Bars, The Queen Elizabeth Silver & Golden Jubilee Medal**

**Internment (Funeral) Service** at Orono Cemetery  
**Reception** at 420 Wing RCAFA Oshawa  
Thursday, July 7, 2022

This summary was prepared for the 151 Chadburn Squadron Archives *plus* anyone unable to attend the events of this day honouring a fabulous father, friend, mentor, Duplate/PPG manufacturing engineer... who, for 25 years was the unit’s longest serving Commanding Officer (1958-82). Members past and present extend condolences to Gil’s family and friends on their loss and offer thanks to all concerned for this **Service** and **Reception**.

**Internment (Funeral) Service:**

Gil’s final resting place is just to the west of Hwy 115 in a rural setting at the north end of Orono very near Durham County Forest... *aka* Ganaraska Forest.

This is an 11,000-acre tract of pristine older growth mixed deciduous and coniferous woods on rolling drumlin terrain set aside as conservation land. Coincidentally, its Spruce Valley area was the locale where, from about 1963 to 1995 or so, 151 held its annual weekend Bush Training EX. And a strenuous, very full 36 hours it was! All this just a few short kilometres to the west on the other side of 115 where no doubt... the ghosts of *Cpl Doug Strachan’s Bush Pigs* (1969) are still “Snipe hunting” in the open area of that otherwise dense, dark forest. Fond memories of: field craft, building signal fires; inter-squad manoeuvres; patrolling; kit and rifle inspections; 3 km runs for defaulters with inert 10 lb WWII Lee Enfield Mk 4 .303 rifles held at the port; 2-hr night compass treks; etc. All of it on 3-4 hours sleep. Wearing his signature US Army *Ridgeway* cap and a multi pocketed late 1950s RCAF flight suit, Gil was in his element orchestrating it all on what must have been one of his favourite bits of turf.



Gil's plot faces east near a southern border fence: his casket head at the west end so getting the dawn full on. It's a lovely open space with maple trees to the west-northwest. It'll be generations before they cast shadows on him. As a pilot he'd appreciate the skyward access as on days like today and stunning nights under a star-lit heaven lying next to his dear first wife Carolyn (1970-95), loving mother of his children.

photo: Brian Cotter

Gil left Oshawa in the Armstrong Funeral Home coach escorted by Maj Garry Burns who, also a Chaplain, officiated at the Service. On departure he observed of his friend and mentor: *"Our final ride together."* By 13:10 when they arrived a large crowd of mourners had already gathered. Much mingling with greetings among old friends and sharing of memories was underway... while many others were lost in private reflection. At 13:30 Garry began the Service wherein the 151 Pallbearer Party set Gil's casket over the plot. He was assisted by his friend Sylvia Brumwell who handed him liturgical resources as needed. Early on he thanked her for getting him there that day. A difficult day for us all... and a stunning, near cloudless one featuring a bright blue sky and warm sunlight. No doubt, being the centre of all this attention and fuss would've embarrassed Gil.



As Chaplain, former 151 CO, Maj Garry Burns conducted the Service. Note: Trumpeter Cadet WO2 Baldasaro to his right and the Pallbearer Party of 151 Officers, centre and left.

photo: Terry Holland



I estimate there were 95 *plus* mourners including the Pallbearer Party under 151's current CO Maj Ron Brosseau with trumpeter 151 Cadet WO2 Madeline Baldasaro playing very moving renditions of **Last Post** and **Reveille**. Bravo her!

Representing the Air Cadet League of Canada was Mr John Nolan, National Director. Among the mourners were close family and friends *plus* most of Gil's 151 staff from his early-mid years as CO: Ted McRae, Klaus Anselstetter, Stu Beaton, Jim Vanderende, Al Day and their lovely wives. Many ex Cadets were present: a few from the 1960s, several from the 70s and some from the 80s and 90s.



Ex Cdts, fore: Terry Holland & Rich Gimblett  
mid centre: Al Day & Bob Crystal.

photo: Nina Weigel

Readings included: **A Fallen Limb** by former CO Lt Col Stewart Beaton, ret'd and **The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm** by Brad Richardson, Gil's nephew. The liturgy Garry offered was thoughtful, very appropriate and spoke to multi-faith, universal themes. Knowing Gil he would certainly have appreciated their communal sentiments.



Stu Beaton, reading **A Fallen Limb**.

photo: Nina Weigel



Brad Richardson reading the **23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm**.

photo: Nina Weigel

The crowd lingered for a while before departing... most to 420 Wing Oshawa.

**Highlights of the 420 Wing Reception:** Capt Bert Weigel as MC.

- Garry said grace but... still in “Orono mode” strayed into tales of Gil until saved by old friend, former SWO WO1 Dave Fletcher’s teasing quip: “*Is the prayer over yet?*” Bert then invited all to sample the fine buffet and refreshments: much further sharing of memories and “war stories” ensued.
- After a few preliminaries, Bert called me to deliver a rendition of **High Flight** which I did with a short lead-in reminding all that Gil had also been a pilot with many hours logged thus the sonnet was both apt and allegorical of him.



Brian Cotter, former SWO (Fall) 1972 reciting the sonnet **High Flight**.

photo: Terry Holland

Ted McRae, former Lt and 151 Adjutant under Gil delivering the **Eulogy** for his long-time friend.

photo: Brian Cotter

- Ted McRae offered a very elegant **Eulogy** which was buoyant yet reflective and opened with Gil’s three passions in life: his family 1<sup>st</sup>, Air Cadets 2<sup>nd</sup> and Travel 3<sup>rd</sup>. He covered Gil’s growing up years including the loss of his father at a young age; his involvement in all kinds of sports and outdoor activities; his Cadet career; his life as a “cool” active bachelor including his extensive *off the beaten-path* travels e.g., 1960s Africa, the Middle East including Nasser’s Egypt, Warsaw Pact eastern Europe, Castro’s Cuba, etc.; Gil’s marriage to Carol; his sheer excitement at becoming a father and the years he and Carol shared before her tragic death in a 1995 car accident. Ted also talked about Gil’s energetic, innovative years as CO and his time as an Area Colonel; his 2004 marriage to Nancy, socializing in his happily busy retirement, beating lupus, and his final decline. Things most of us had never heard. In a poignant summing up, Ted felt only one other person inspired more 151 Cadets: Wing Commander Lloyd Vernon Chadburn, DSO & Bar, DFC. (Alas, I was so enthralled I forgot to film Ted.)



- Having joined 151 during the years that welcomed female Cadets, served for years as an officer and done three tours as CO, Bert Weigel gave a **Tribute** to Gil reminiscing on Cadet life and life lessons learned under him. It was highly entertaining and full of many tales e.g., parental impressions of Gil, various Cadet tours and events, non-parade night shenanigans like *Rotary Hall roller derby* on bikes then hopping the fence to cool off après in Rotary Pool late at night, etc. Lots on MBO (Management-by-Objectives) and leadership gems from Gil and about his impromptu, inspirational and eloquent talks often with few, if any notes but always with poignant or subtle gems for Cadets and staff. Then, maybe to protect the guilty *aka* to avoid litigation, Bert didn't offer much on non PC items like the *Sauerkraut ceremony* for newly minted Cpls or Durham County Forest, etc. Though there might've been a mention of pecking order seating and straw launched soft projectiles on bus tours or foggy references to singing possibly ribald tunes aboard Her Majesty's vehicles of the Ontario Regiment. Regardless of one's 151 era, Bert's remarks resonate for any ex Cadet or staffer. We each have these sort of life memories involving or inspired by Gil.
- Gil's son Brian shared several reflections including on growing up perhaps in his shadow. He admitted he never joined Air Cadets because he got so much of it at home and so... felt he was *already* enrolled. He shared other morsels including that when his dad was an emeritus volunteer it was Brian who coached him on designing 151's fantastic website which earned Gil many kudos. Brian's tales were marvellous and heartfelt as were comments from daughter Heidi, a former 151 WO2 and Drum Major, who thanked attendees for their many years of friendship, love and respect for their father.



Bert Weigel delivering his **Tribute** to Gil.

photo: Nina Weigel



Brian Gilbank offering his remarks.

photo: Brian Cotter

Many visited the **Photo Collage** at 420 Wing with its fine selection of Gil with family, friends, etc.; some rarely if ever seen. Each captured his dynamic personality, which is how I for one will always remember him. In his **Eulogy** Ted McRae had mentioned that Gil had a rough decline in the last several months especially in Sunnybrook Veterans' Wing where COVID limited visitation for all but a very few. He faced it all with stoicism yet near the end the challenges were very hard. Gil's second wife Nancy (2004-21) cared for him faithfully through many health issues until beset by her own. She was with him in his last hours. At 420 Wing she shared with me that he was thankful for his full life and spoke often over the years of the many fine people he'd shared it with.

Several will recall that one of Gil's oft cited maxims was: ***"Enthusiasm is the key to success!"*** Many who encountered Gil became believers... such as the ex Cadets on hand from my era — Glenn, Michael and Roland Weigel, Rich Gimblett, Gary Ottenbrite, Terry Holland and Drew Wilson. All in fine form and full of tales of their formative years growing from boys to young men under Gil... they hung on at 420 Wing to close the place. Others could not be there and have expressed their great regret e.g., David Warnica, William Millar, Peter Gruenberg and Ross Francis. Doubtless there are many more from various eras. If over the months and years ahead some who were once connected with Gil or 151 hear of his passing... the Squadron will share this summary.

For decades **The Oshawa Rotary Club**, the **City of Oshawa** and **Durham Region** had an incredible partner and community resource in Roland Edward Gilbank: one who guided and inspired over 4,000 youths as estimated by the Squadron. But Gil's influence on Air Cadets went far beyond Oshawa or Durham Region! I among others can attest that he had a *ripple effect* on many more thousands across Ontario and Eastern Quebec given his:

- time at **RCAF Clinton** Summer Camps as a Training Officer in the mid to late 1950s and early 1960s; indeed legend has it that one summer Gil and a brother Flying Officer (a Lt) had to pull an "all-nighter" to rewrite the entire training syllabus... this to be implemented by 08:00 hrs the next day;
- 12-week stint as a Major at Summer Camp 1972, **CFB Trenton** as **Camp Training Officer** responsible for 180 staff and 2,100 *plus* Cadets;
- his impact on young officers and NCOs who were inspired and became adherents by/of him... and those who were trained/led by his adherents in many Cadet Squadrons and at Trenton Air Cadet Camp in the 1970s-90s;
- his impact on the Ontario Provincial Committee, his advice and leadership as **Area Colonel** for Ontario... or even his influence on the CF Reg Force: Sr Staff Officer Cadets, CFB Trenton later Regional Cadet Office, or its CFB Downsview Detachment. (See Gil's MEMORY WALL for a tribute by RCAF Col David Higgins who, as an RCO Lt Col oversaw Gil.) Perhaps even Director Cadets, NDHQ Ottawa and... the National Office of the Air Cadet League of Canada.

## **RIP Gil:**

As my friend Dave Warnica, former SWO WO2, (Winter) 1973 recalled... Gil was generous to a fault! Dave also reminded me, and I'm sure we speak for many when we say, that Ted Gilbank was an amazing influence on countless young people for however long they were associated with him. Why? Because he offered experiences, training, life lessons, his own time and distinctive insight... and he attracted a team of officers and instructors who did as well. These were things our parents or others in our lives... often could not or would not offer perhaps because they were just not equipped or able to do so!

To be sure, and as Gil would freely admit, he made his share of mistakes... yet he *pressed on* and learned from them to have such a profound, positive impact on so many through his initiative, drive and enthusiasm.

Perhaps my long ago friend, William Millar, who as a Sgt won his pilot's Wings with 151 in 1971, said it best for so many in his post on Gil's MEMORY WALL:

***“AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN, WE SHALL REMEMBER HIM.”***



## **Last Post:**

Played by 151 Sgn. Trumpeter, WO2 Baldasaro.

photo: Nina Weigel

This summary was completed by **Brian Cotter**, Toronto Aug 3, 2022

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Att'd: 534 Sgn Peterborough, 2Lt then Lt as Trg O & A/CO, 1974-76 while at Trent U; then Sup List 1977-97

Civie career: **Book Pub'g** sales & mktg, sr exec 1980-95; **TV/Film** sales, producer, exec producer 1996-2019

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**NB:** Many thanks to **Nina Weigel**, Bert's lovely wife and dear friend **Terry Holland**, ex 151 Sgn 1969-73 who, as Flt Sgt won his pilot's Wings with 151 in 1973, for their permission to use their thoughtful photos.

In the near future it is expected that ex-Cadets and friends of 151 and of Gil and his family and other interested parties may obtain the following via the Squadron Archives or Website:

- a pdf of the outline notes to Ted McRae's **Eulogy**;
- a Link to download a short video of Brian Cotter's reading of **High Flight** recorded by Terry Holland; and,
- a Link to download a video of highlights from Bert Weigel's **Tribute** recorded by Nina Wiegel and/or a pdf of his speaking notes.

See also **MEMORY WALL** postings on the Armstrong Funeral Home site at:

<https://www.armstrongfh.ca/memorials/roland-gilbank/4969753/index.php#wall>

and, Gil's **OBITUARY** at:

<https://www.armstrongfh.ca/memorials/rolandgilbank/4969753/index.php#details>

### **Gil's 151 Legacy of Excellence:**

Since it was "stood up" in 1942, 151 Chadburn Squadron has accumulated countless awards and prizes though not especially in its earliest years. It is no coincidence that its long tradition of recognized excellence got its start when the unit won **Ontario Proficiency 1st** in **1968**... ten years into Gil's tenure as CO. It was a huge achievement in that 151 was parading only about 65-70 Cadets most nights. And it was on the verge of eviction: back then the City of Oshawa's Recreation Dept. felt they needed Rotary Hall for better, more pressing uses. Then, in 1970 151 stunned even ourselves by winning the **Ontario 1<sup>st</sup>** award, *again and* the **National Proficiency 1<sup>st</sup>** aka **Best Squadron in Canada!** We pulled it off with, by then a mere 80-85 Cadets — far fewer than many *power house* units e.g., 631, 180 or 150 with 140-200 *plus* Cadets and Bands. I recall it well as I was there as a newly promoted Cpl under the peerless SWO WO2 Darrell Burns.

These "big wins", including an **Ontario 6<sup>th</sup>** in 1969, were a remarkable turnaround considering 151 had perpetually been just one of many small units and was on the brink of *homelessness*... its continued existence in doubt. Grim indeed... but these "wins" *put us on the map* and instilled incredible *esprit de corps!* That all this happened was/is a tribute to Gil's strategic vision, organizational acumen and personal leadership including his drive, many innovations and salesmanship. They were the result of the coalescing of many factors — like a Stanley Cup Winning Team. And the rest, as they say is history!

For more on the legacy Gil inspired see: <http://www.chadburn.org> and especially... <https://www.chadburn.org/squadron-history/cadet-trophies/>