



REMEMBERING
Gilbert Harder (Gil)

January 10, 1933 - May 13, 2020



Gilbert Vernon (Gil) Harder, long time resident of Abbotsford, passed away peacefully into the presence of his Lord, 76 years to the day of his much loved and surely missed mother, on May 13, 2020, after a brief illness with cancer.

Gil was predeceased by his mother, Margaretha in 1944 and his Father, Abram in 1959. The youngest of six children, Gil was also predeceased by sisters Frances, Tina, Alice, Luella and brother Eldon. Gil is survived by his sister-in-law Helen Harder (Eldon)

Gil is also survived by his loving Wife of 67 years, Bernice, and Children, Carol Janzen (Henry), Arlene Munoz, Daniel Harder (Arianne Mae) and Tracey Mrak (Peter). Fondly remembered as Pappa and loved by Grandchildren, Jason Walls, Michelle Walls, Mathew Janzen, Raedene Janzen, Vayda Munoz, Cole Mrak, Christine Vivian (Mrak) and their respective spouses. As well as Pappa's adored Great-Grandchildren, Oakley and Griffin.

He will be missed by many nephews, nieces, in-laws, friends & family.

Gilbert's journey began on a cold wintry road between the family homestead in Laird, SK and the midwife's home on January 10, 1933.

Life was not easy in those days. Soon after Gilbert's birth, the family suffered a major loss of their farm in Laird to fire. The family moved to a rural parcel of land in an area known as Capasain, SK, where they took up living off the land.

Gil lost his oldest sister, Frances in 1939 to Rheumatic Fever and in 1944, at the age of 11, he lost his mother, Margaretha to cancer. That event would leave a lasting impression on the young Gilbert that would fuel his love and commitment to

family ever after. When his two older siblings, Eldon and Luella, moved out of the home, shortly after their mother's passing, young Gilbert was sent to live with relatives in the Laird, SK. area, while his Dad set out to finding better prospects for their future.

It was from these ties to other family members, Gil's love for music and song was born, which not only was enjoyed by anyone fortunate enough to listen to him sing and play but served him and his friend, Ben Peters well, in making a couple of dollars from time to time, singing at various radio stations throughout western Canada and with his brother Eldon, at the local Legion and other dance venues.

Gil learned early in life, from helping on the family homestead, the value of hard work and that ethic took him many places throughout central Canada, eventually all the way to Ontario, while still in his youth. It was in Ontario that Gil received word that his brother and father had moved out to Abbotsford, BC and in 1948 at 15 years of age, Gil hopped on a train and headed out to join them in BC.

He arrived in Matsqui, BC shortly after the great flood of '48 in the local area and soon found his first job, alongside his dad and brother, working on new diking infrastructure in the area. He later would venture out of town for tough but high paying jobs, as they presented themselves, along with his two best buddies, Ernie Giesbrecht and Jake "Swede" Goertzen - The Three Musketeers. It was during their adventures between working out of town and living in Abbotsford, that a young and pretty, local girl, caught Gil's eye and he had caught her attention. After a brief courtship, the love-smitten Gil proposed and soon he and his new bride, Bernice (Leippi), who he would forever affectionately call his "Teary-Deary" were wed on April 10, 1953, in Langley, BC

Wasting no time to get started on a family, they were soon blessed with daughters Carol and Arlene in 1954 and 1955 respectively. After a brief go at a small farm on King Road in Abbotsford, the new Harder family ventured across the Strait of Georgia to Port Alberni, BC, on Vancouver Island, where Gil found work in a saw mill. It was here that Gil made the decision to commit himself to the Lord through Baptism in his wife Bernice's Lutheran Faith, along with their two little daughters.

Life soon found the family back in Abbotsford, where Gil and Bernice tried their hand at entrepreneurship, starting up and becoming the original proprietors of a little ice cream/malt shoppe called "The Cone Drive-In" on South Fraser Way, in the little village of Clearbrook (Abbotsford) located where today's Dairy Queen parking lot is. (Later the building/business was relocated on the south side of the new Hwy 1 on Clearbrook Road, near Marshall Extension) It was also during this period, in 1959, that Gil's father, Abram was called home to God.

Soon the call to seek more reliable income came again and the Harders found themselves on another adventure, this time moving to Fort St. John, BC where Gil provided for his family, working on road crews doing upgrades to the Alaskan Hwy and the new Hart Hwy along with other road and dam improvements in the region at the time. Life was rugged up north during those times as most communities were made up of mostly young families living out of small travel trailers, while their men were out in the work camps. During one of those hiatuses, Gil and Bernice were again blessed by another child, their son Daniel in 1962. Despite making many new

friends while in Fort St. John, Gil decided the rugged north was no place to raise a family and soon the family moved back once again to the place they would now call home for good, Abbotsford.

Gil never being one who shied from hard labour, continued to find out of town work with road construction crews, working on Hwy 1 improvements through the Fraser Canyon and along the #3 Crows Nest out to Princeton, BC. In 1966, the youngest and final addition to the Harder clan arrived, daughter Tracey. The family resided on a small, one acre parcel on Peardonville Road, near the now intersection of Emerson/Peardonville. Over the years, Gil would switch between out of town work and local jobs, most notable, at the local Clayburn Brick Plant but by now "bitumen flowed through Gil's veins" and soon Gil started up a couple of asphalt paving companies in Abbotsford.

His first company, J.R. Paving, along with long time friend, Jerry Ratzlaff, and later, a larger company, Fraser City Paving, with partner and co-worker from Columbia Bitulithic, Clarence Gallenger. Many driveways, parking lots and streets were paved as a result of Gil's dedication to hard work and self-prosperity. After many successful years and a move to the family's new home on Magnolia Crescent, Gil sold the business and went back to working for Columbia Bitulithic and other paving companies.

An old work injury plagued Gil for years and eventually he decided to settle into trying something less physical and began owner/operator trucking businesses, until finally deciding a new change was necessary. Gil trained for and became a custodial engineer, eventually finding work with School District 34 (Abbotsford) where he enjoyed his work until retirement and continued to stay connected with his coworkers and friends, at local monthly luncheons.

Gil was a dedicated family man, another good moral ethic he had and enjoyed spending as much time as he could with his Teary-Deary and children. Later, spending even more time, while in retirement, with his grandchildren, whom he adored. Active in the church for many years, Gil witnessed with pride, his children following Confirmation in Lutheranism and enjoyed being a part of his children's sports activities on church youth teams, minor sport leagues and watching his youngest, Tracey, in dance. An avid fisherman, Gil enjoyed camping, and many a time would find himself and his family in some adventure in out of the way places throughout BC. He was a member in the local Eagles Order and Foresters Fraternity and a member of both the local Teamsters and Operator Engineer unions.

Loved and remembered by many, Gilbert and Bernice laid down roots in Abbotsford for many years. Wherever Gil went, he quickly made and retained many, many friendships. Gilbert was a big part of the infrastructural growth of Abbotsford and had many a friend in every local business in town. Everyone knew Gil Harder. He was well liked by all and enjoyed getting together for coffee with many of those long time friends, at the local coffee shops in town, before and after his retirement.

Always proud of his gardens and the produce that came from his dedication of toiling, he would be known to share his good fortune of vegetables with friends and family until he and Bernice sold the family home and moved to Centennial Court on

Gladwin Road. Towards his later years, he began to participate more at Prairie Chapel in Yarrow, BC until his years of non-stop, hard work began creeping up on him and soon his health found him residing at the Cottage-Worthington Pavilion in Abbotsford. Never allowing a setback define him, Gil thrived at the Cottage as well, making new friendships with staff and clients alike, participating in all the activities, including the local youth dance troupe presentation(s) at his new home. Ever the charismatic, warm and charming individual, the "Mayor of the Cottage" as he was affectionately referred by, could always make friends and was well loved and will be missed by all at the Cottage. Of course his family and friends always remained close, visiting often and making sure he came home for all the family get-together.

On May 13, 2020, after battling cancer valiantly for a month, Gilbert was at last called up yonder and is most likely now playing guitar and harmonizing Praises to God, along with his brother Eldon, as they had done for so many years together, here on Earth. We lost a good soul here in this life, but Heaven gained a bright new star in the next.

"When at last, I shall cross Over Jordan's banks; I shall cross, with His Hand holding mine."

Due to the present situation there will be no service or memorial at this time but may be announced of one in the future.

