
Richard Gilbert



On January 6, 2011, The Rev. Dr. Richard R. Gilbert died at home with his loving wife, Juanita Swann-Gilbert, at his side.

Born in Thomasville, GA, on October 21, 1924, Dick was the son of Mary Cooper Christian of Atlanta and world-renowned musician/organist Harry Gilbert of NYC. In 1941 Dick enlisted in the US Army at the age of 17 and became a part of George Patton's 3rd Army, fighting many battles including the Battle of the Bulge. His awards include the Silver Star, the [Purple Heart](#) with cluster, the [Bronze Star](#) with cluster and V for Valor, and the Combat Infantry Badge. After the war Dick graduated from the [University of Georgia](#), then entered a pastoral career receiving his Master of Divinity in 1951 and his Master of Theology in 1959 from Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1958 he was awarded the Doctor of Divinity by Pikeville College, Pikeville, KY. He also studied at Columbia University in NYC and interacted with many of the leading theologians of the time. In 1952 he served four years as Pastor of the Washington College Presbyterian Church, in Washington College, TN.

Dick then worked in the Division of Evangelism for the United Presbyterian Church in NYC. From 1963-1974, he was the Executive Director of Mass Media for the United Presbyterian Church also in NYC, and served on the Board of National Missions. He led many outreach programs for the church, was a writer-producer and lecturer with numerous television appearances. Dr. Gilbert founded the School of Continuing Education at Princeton Seminary. First serving as a consultant to NBC in 1976, he then became Director of Research for NBC's Broadcast Standards Department until 1988. He went on to enjoy an active career in public relations, speaking, consulting, writing, and editing. In 2001 Dick wrote a book of table blessings called *Amazing Graces*, a beautiful collection of poetry and "blessings to season your meals." Dick was a founding board member of WiRED International, a non-profit, global medical support organization until his death. Along with his broad, rewarding career, Dick's greatest joy in life was his beloved family and life-long friends. His compassionate, generous nature, optimism, and vibrant personality touched all who knew him. His first wife, Margaret Wardlaw Gilbert, died in 1995. He was also preceded in death by his sisters, Virginia Gilbert Gersuk and Lari Christian Dickson, and brother, Philip Duval Christian. He married Juanita Swann-Gilbert in 1997; their life together was an inspiration to all who knew them. Dick was an athlete and sports aficionado. He was the senior badminton champion of NC and the President Emeritus of the Asheville Badminton Club, which he had founded.

In addition to his wife Juanita, he is survived by his loving daughters and step-daughters and their spouses: Allison Gilbert Kozicharow and Eugene Kozicharow of Germantown, MD; Virginia Gaines Gilbert and Christopher Mulligan of Los Angeles, CA; Jerita Wright of Weaverville, NC, and Nathan Villarreal of San Antonio, Texas; and Joni White and Kelly White of Covington, KY; as well as four grandchildren: Margaret Kozicharow, Nicola Kozicharow, Jack Mackay, and Katherine Mackay; four step-grandchildren: Jacob Mahaffey, Logan White, Alexander Villarreal, and Jasmine Villarreal; his sister, Mary Ann Christian Jacob, and Richard Jacob of Alpharetta, GA; and many nieces and nephews.

Dick Gilbert will be cherished in the hearts of his loved ones and his community. He would wish that memorials be made in his name to WiRED International (<http://www.wiredinternational.org/>) or to Meals on Wheels.

His funeral service will be held at 2:30 p.m., Saturday, January 15, 2011, in Pleasant Grove Church, Weaverville, with Rev. Dr. Rob Blackburn officiating. Burial will be in the church cemetery with military rites by [VFW](#) Post #5483 Mars Hill Memorial Team.

A service celebrating Dick's life will be held at Central United Methodist Church in the spring, to be announced at a later date.

West Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

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