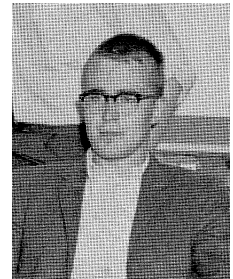


Kelly, Gilbert Bruce (February 24, 1939—July 18, 2017)

Gil Kelly '61 from Omaha, Nebraska was at Grinnell for his first three semesters of college, He was active in the Young Republicans; on the staff and business manager of the *Maverick*, a literary quarterly publication; and a member of the Manuscript Club. Another officer of *Maverick*, Jerry Tecklin '60 remembers Gil as “a bright and extremely quirky fellow. He was a dedicated classics major, a very rare thing then, and a student of Classics Professor William McKibben, who was very intelligent, warm, and very quirky himself. Gil immersed himself in reading and studying among piles of books in his Langan Hall room and hardly appeared outside of his cave, having secluded himself for high-minded search into knowledge with a capital K.”

Indeed, according to the 1958 *Cyclone*, Gil’s “room became one of the wonders of the world” or in the words of a classmate and hallmate, “to get into his room you had to take a run from down the hall and dive over all the stuff in the doorway to get in.” Gil later wittingly said he was impressed the College “could tolerate me as long as it did.” Here is a photograph of him on the *Maverick* staff from the 1958 *Cyclone*.



He subsequently obtained his B.A. degree in Classics from the University of Nebraska-Omaha and his Ph.D. in English from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Gil then taught English at Bluefield College in Virginia and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln before becoming a book editor at the University of Nebraska Press.



In 1984 Gil moved to Williamsburg, Virginia to be the Managing Editor of Book Publications for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture (<https://oieahc.wm.edu/>) at the College of William & Mary. For the next 30 years he edited important books for early American history scholars while training many students in the art of meticulous editing. Here is a photograph of Gil from his years at the Institute.

Upon his retirement at the Institute, its Director said Gil had “decided to devote himself full time to his Porsche and his pipe and to leave dangling participles, run-on sentences, misplaced modifiers, and other excruciating grammatical atrocities” to his successor while over sixty colleagues, authors, postdoctoral fellows and editorial apprentices expressed appreciation for his many talents. An author said Gil “could sense pretentiousness like a pig sniffing out a truffle.” Another author complimented Gil’s skill as a Latinist in re-translating a poem from Latin to English as well as “his deep knowledge of Italian Baroque violin music.” A female author said, “His repartee made me feel like the heroine

in a 40's musical, the one where the plucky young thing has her future handed to her by the smoky-voiced cynic with a heart of gold." Yet another person shared what he called "Gillicisms; You may do as you wish, but you should know where linguistic purity lies—Incoherent: could you recast?—The more useful and less pedantic way to handle—A little bit of unneeded verbiage." (Hoffman, From the Director's Desk (<https://oieahc.wm.edu/uncommon/131/index.cfm>); Teute, Of Pigs and Prose: Excerpt from Gil's Book of Remembrances, Compiled Fall 2012-Spring 2013, <https://oieahc.wm.edu/uncommon/131/pigs.cfm>)

Similar thoughts were uttered in the Institute's Memorial for Gil by Fredrika Teute, the Director of its Book Publishing Division. (http://oieahc.wm.edu/ucs/memorium_kelly.html). She said the following:

- "Gil Kelly was an old soul. He lived a singular life. Yet, with great relish, he scattered gems of his knowledge, wisdom, and interests on the people around him, often amazing and sometimes baffling them with the extent, erudition, and oddities within his purview. He saw a pattern and logic to things, which at times could be challenging for his interlocutors to comprehend. The mechanics of design appealed to his aesthetic sense, so he preferred manual typewriters over electric, electric over computers. Blue pencil, typescript, and linotype machine were his MO for publishing a book."
- "He was a tinker, carpenter, cook, musicologist who couldn't carry a tune, rhymester, translator of Greek and Latin, dumpster diver, and packrat. As a handyman around the Institute, he made bookshelves, refinished desks and tables, and produced Lucite book stands by baking them in his oven. . . . His tamales were legendary, as were his chocolate chip cookie-muffins. He was an aficionado of the Baroque canon: Purcell was a favorite. Mozart he found insipid."
- "Shortly before he retired, he purchased a silver Porsche Boxter that gave him joy and made him young at heart. He took on the air of a bon vivant, giving female friends a spin in the Boxter with the top down.'

Gil's eccentric wit also came out in remembrances in the Nelsen Funeral Home's Guest Book. An editor apprentice observed, "Gil taught me editing in . . . one of the best summers of my life, including travels in publishing he'd arranged around Virginia and North Carolina, accompanied by his many tales, observations, and puffs on his ever-present pipe. . . . Gil's manner of table talk [was] charming and edifying. [He had an] inimitable drawl or his way of delivering a line you're not quite sure is a joke and waiting for it to sink in."

Relatives of his former wife recalled Gil's "singing loudly and off tune at a St. Patty's Day Party while sipping Irish coffee.....[his] turning us on to seltzer bottles and coke syrup.....[his] making a toothbrush function as a turn/blinker lever.by melting the end.....lighting up his pipe while eating at a Mexican restaurant and changing the scent of the whole place.....grinding the gears

in the Peugeot, and reminding me of Colombo.....and . . . listening to him talk while looking over his glasses. . . . Heaven now has an acting Managing Editor!"

Gil is survived by his daughter Heather Hobgood and her husband, Brandon; two sisters, Lynne Cheshire and Colleen Saariscsany (Jim); and many nephews and nieces.

Duane W. Krohnke