

## In Memoriam

## Robert H. "Gilly" Gilliland, Jr.

By: Joe Crosswait

For reasons perhaps best left to a mental health expert to explain, I decided even before law school that upon graduation I would open my own practice. In keeping with the adage "I'd rather be luckier than smarter", early in my career I made acquaintance with and took advantage of a small cadre of consummate professionals to model and from whom to learn as I sought to build a professional life. On my perennial short list of confreres has always been Bob Gilliland who was affectionately known as "Gilly" by his many friends and his partners at McAfee & Taft.

I met Gilly one year into my practice in 1975. It happened that we had both entered the OCBA Tennis Tournament. He and his partner lost in the first round as did I and my partner whereupon our respective partners unceremoniously dumped us. Somehow he and I teamed up in the consolation bracket and went on to win it. In Gilly's words, we came in "first amongst the losers". (A perfect example of his self-effacing humility). It was in that tournament and in our celebratory quaff that I first came to know a person who would have a profound impact on my professional growth just as he did for so many others. I knew then that I had a lifelong friend.

It was then that he invited me to join the OCBA

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Fee Grievance and Ethics Committee of which he was Chair. What a wonderful experience for a new lawyer and especially one who is out on his own. Thereafter, despite and perhaps because there was then no Caller ID or Call Blocker, he patiently assisted me with what must have seemed almost trivial questions from a newbie. There were a few cases that he joined me in the representation even though they were not matters that ordinarily might have interested him, but he was willing to help me learn. To be sure, we also joined together in a few matters that were enjoyable and challenging. He advised me on innumerable matters.

Gilly has been rightly described as one of the finest trial lawyers Oklahoma has ever produced and he truly was a Man for All Seasons. From his

prolific trial work to his intense love and support of his family, to his dedication to his Church where he served as a Stephen Minister, a Whiz Kid Tutor and on the Vestry, to his Bronze Star decorated service to the United States and dedication to our veterans, and to his government service in the Workers' Compensation Commission and as Chair of the Pardon and Parole Board, Gilly modeled professionalism, integrity and sincerity with a perfect touch of friendly goofiness. His volunteerism and contributions to Central Oklahoma Habitat for Humanity of which his wife Ann is CEO was tireless.

His service on the OBA's Professional Responsibility Tribunal is described as "...always fair, patient, and thorough." In the early days of Oklahoma Lawyers For Children, during a time when experienced trial lawyers were in short supply, he and several attorneys from McAfee & Taft tried many termination of parental rights jury trials. He remained active in OLFC even after retiring from his firm to enter government service. Gilly's impact was wide, deep and consequential.

Thank you Gilly for all you have been to so many. Rest in peace. You will be loved and missed by all those fortunate enough to know your good soul.

I encourage all to read the tribute to Gilly on the McAfee & Taft website.