



## Donald E. "Monk" Gilman

July 27, 1918 - September 6, 2008

Donald E. "Monk" Gilman, age 90, of Beach, North Dakota, passed away on Sunday, August 31, 2008, at the Billings Clinic Hospital in Billings, Montana. Memorial Services with Military Honors will be held at 2:00 P.M., Saturday, September 6, 2008, at the American Legion Club in Beach with Celebrant Sandy Silha officiating. Interment will be held at 12:00 P.M. Central Time, Monday, September 8, 2008, at the North Dakota Veteran's Cemetery in Mandan, North Dakota. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Beach is entrusted with arrangements. Donald was born on July 27, 1918, in Beach, North Dakota, the third son of Thomas A. and Pearl (Logan) Gilman. He was raised and educated in Beach. As a child, he was an excellent climber from the time he could walk. When Donald was three years old, his father came home to find Donald in the rafters of a shed under construction in the yard. While his father was bringing Donald down to safety, he referred to him as his "little monkey." The nickname stuck and was later shortened to "Monk." In the 1930s, Monk and his two brothers moved to Los Angeles, California, and worked for the Richfield Oil Company. Two years later Monk and his brother Harris moved to Seattle, Washington, and built planes for Boeing needed for the war going on in Europe. Monk was united in marriage to Loma Clark on November 22, 1942, in Alexander, Louisiana. After their marriage, the couple lived in Louisiana, Alabama, and Texas while Monk served in the United States Army. He volunteered for the Army on June 4, 1942, at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. After basic training in Camp Livingston, Louisiana, Monk worked

with Army soldiers who wanted to become US citizens. He helped them in their preparations for their testing and took them to Dallas, Texas to be naturalized. Monk often said it was the most rewarding experience of his Army life. Monk was sent to Okinawa in August of 1945. During the trip across the Pacific, he was accompanied by sea sickness day after day. He swore he would not return until a bridge was built from the South Seas to the shore of the United States, but Japan surrendered in September of 1945 and on January 6, 1946, without the bridge, Monk boarded a ship for home. He was honorably discharged from the Army on January 23, 1946, at Fort Lewis, Washington. Monk and Loma returned to Beach, where they have continued to reside. Monk operated the Gilman Transfer Dray Business for many years and later operated the Dairy Distribution for Foremost and Cass-Clay Dairy. Monk was a member of the Beach American Legion for 50 years. He was a charter member of the original 25 men of the XGI Beach Drill Team and served as the team's drill sergeant. He was a member of the Beach Volunteer Fire Department and served as Fire Chief for 25 years from 1956 to 1980. There were four generations of firefighters in the Gilman family: Monk's father, Tom; Monk; his son, Bob; and Monk's grandson, J.T. Gilman. Monk was elected president of the ND Firemen's Association in 1959. In 1960 he was elected as ND Firemen's Association Executive Secretary, and he continued the position for 37 years. Monk was one of the first six inductees into the North Dakota Firefighter's Hall of Fame on October 14, 2006. He was a Mason and a Shriner. He served on the Golden Valley County Museum Board for many years and on the Fair Board for 40 years. He was the local Disaster Emergency Service coordinator for many years. Monk was very involved with his children's lives including Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, 4-H and FFA. He was an excellent carpenter and loved to hunt with his grandchildren. Monk was preceded in death by his parents; his brothers, Harris, Gerald, and Rex; and his sister, Bernice. Monk is survived by his wife, Loma of Beach; his daughter, Rita Frank of Glendive, Montana; his son, Bob Gilman and his wife Pamela of Deer Lodge, Montana; his brother, Tom Gilman and his wife Bev of

Kalispell, Montana; his sister Alleen Berg of Minneapolis, Minnesota; and his three grandchildren, Justin, Lindsay, and Kacie Gilman all of Deer Lodge, Montana. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made in Monk's name to the North Dakota Firefighters Museum, P.O. Box 1000, Garrison, ND 58540; the Beach Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 744, Beach, ND 58621; or the Golden Valley County Veterans Memorial, P.O. Box 543, Beach, ND 58621.

Welcome: Master of Ceremonies Song: "Old Rugged Cross" by Melissa Schillo and Carla Steffen Eulogy: Celebrant "Why am I so lucky?" According to his wife, Loma, Donald "Monk" Gilman must have said this a million times throughout his lifetime. "Why am I so lucky?" Perhaps the answer lies in the manner in which Monk lived his life. Monk was an unselfish, humble man. He loved and appreciated his family, friends and community. Monk concentrated on what he had, rather than what he didn't have. He had a good work ethic, up early and busy all the time. Monk would go the extra mile to do a job right or because someone needed something. Monk commanded respect in all that he did. He was a leader who immediately took charge and did things his way. He could recognize the need for change and was not afraid to make those changes; he approached most everything with dedication and humor; he was a problem solver. And Monk had a mission in life: to serve his fellow man. Throughout his 90 years of living, Monk Gilman loved and enjoyed all life had to offer and he loved and enjoyed the people in his life. Born, raised and educated here in Beach, Monk was the fifth child in a family of seven children. Monk's growing up years had many adversities. When Monk was nine, his mother died unexpectedly. About a year and a half later, their house burned down, and they lost everything. No one was in the house or was hurt, but for a time the kids were scattered around town until their father could regroup. And then came the Depression. The family was very poor. Monk would tell of not having good shoes to wear. He would cut out three sets of cardboard soles each morning to wear in his shoes that day. The first sole would get him to school but then it was worn out so Monk would throw it away. The second sole

would get him through the school day, the third would get him home. But as Monk would say, “they didn’t know they were poor, because the government hadn’t told them they were poor.” It was how life was. And Monk didn’t talk about his youth as being unhappy. There were always lots of kids to play with, both siblings and neighborhood children. After his mother died, Monk’s father cared for his family and was always there for them. Monk’s sister, Alleen, recalls Monk being a good brother and because they were close in age, they played together often. Alleen has quite a few stories of those years. When Monk was still in a high chair, she remembers that there were a lot of flies in the house. Alleen would catch the flies, pull off their wings and feed the pieces to Monk. She would tell Monk the flies were raisins, and she says to this day, Monk liked them. A childhood memory Monk often recalled was prior to going into the third grade. His father had a truck he drove for work and Monk would often jump up on the back to ride. He fell off one day, and his father drove over Monk, breaking his leg. Not only did Monk have to wear a cast for six weeks, he missed some school. The good thing was that his mother would spend hours playing her piano for him. Monk loved music. That piano was lost in the house fire, and was the one thing Monk felt the worst over losing. You probably read in Monk’s obituary how he came to be called “Monk.” His father called him a “monkey” because as a toddler, Monk climbed on everything and the other children shortened “monkey” to “Monk.” But this was not a usual nickname, it became the name he would be known as. Everyone called him “Monk.” When he was in the service, Loma asked him how it was known that he was “Monk” instead of Donald. Monk replied that it was because of her. When she had written to him, Loma had addressed the letters to “Monk” Gilman. When Loma and Monk’s wedding was in the newspaper, Loma’s father wondered who this “Donald” was; he was sure he knew most of the Gilmans, so who was this “Donald”; nieces and nephews didn’t realize for years that Monk’s given name was Donald. People have just always known “Donald” as Monk. December 7, 1941. It was a beautiful, bright, and crisp winter day in North Dakota. The price of rabbit pelts was up, and Monk got a

couple of buddies and off they went to hunt rabbits. It was a fun and successful day. As the hunting party approached the city limits of Beach, they could hear the tolling of church bells. Their first stop was a café in town and it was there they stood in shock and awe as they heard the news that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Lives would be forever changed. Shortly after New Years in 1942, Don and his buddies decided to volunteer instead of waiting to be drafted. His two buddies chose to join the Army Air Force, Monk stayed on the ground in the Army. Monk returned from the war, his two friends did not. After basic training, Monk was sent to Texas. When he found he could live off base, he convinced Loma Clark to come to Texas. Monk and Loma had both grown up in Beach and had known each other for years. Loma was dating Monk's friend and Monk was dating Loma's best friend. One day in February, they all climbed into Monk's big car named "Old Bertha", pooled their money for 10 cent a gallon gas, and headed out for a picnic and an icy swim. Loma reports Monk started calling her after that for dates. When Monk sent for Loma to come to Texas, he told Loma to get \$40 he had in the bank and come on down. Loma got the money, and headed to Texas on the train. Halfway there, Loma was pulled off the train. A scared Loma, not knowing what was going on, found out that Monk had been sent to Louisiana, and Monk wanted her put on a train to where he now was. Arriving in Louisiana with six dollars in her pocket, Loma found a job. On November 22, 1942, Monk and Loma were married in Alexander, Louisiana. They spent the next two years there. Monk was assigned to train new recruits. At this time, Monk also took a course in firearms demolition. He passed the test and became part of a three-man demolition team that specialized in cleaning up areas of unspent firearms. After over two years in Louisiana, Monk was transferred to Texarkana. As Loma puts it, she and Monk didn't know where they lived...they slept in Louisiana, worked in Texas, and got their mail and relaxed in Arkansas. Texarkana was a holding depot for supplies that were being received and made ready for shipment to the South Pacific for the invasion of Japan. Orders were received for troops and supplies. In a matter of days,

Monk was on the high seas bound for Okinawa. Loma headed back to Beach. Shortly, after arriving in Okinawa, the Japanese surrendered and Monk's group of soldiers did a bit of mop-up on the island and headed home. On January 6, 1946, Tech Sergeant, Don "Monk" Gilman, boarded a ship for home and was honorably discharged. While in Okinawa, Monk did have quite an experience. A typhoon hit the island. Monk and another young fellow were caught out and about on the island. They took refuge in a cemetery, opening a tomb and sitting inside to get out of the wind, rain, and flying debris. The tomb was dark and full of bugs and spiders, and Monk had his doubts that they would live. He made a vow to God that if he survived, he would return to North Dakota and find ways to serve his fellow man. Monk survived and returned to Beach, and many in the community here, and many across the state can attest to the service and accomplishments of Monk Gilman and his passionate dedication to bettering the world around him. Of all the ways Monk served others, the two closest to his heart were in the areas of fire service and working for veterans and the American Legion. His dedication was instrumental in the development, growth, and success of both the fire service and the American Legion. Monk's father, Tom, was a charter member of the Beach Volunteer Fire Department and had served as its fire chief. It was natural for Monk to follow in his father's footsteps, and not long after joining the department, Monk became Chief. Monk attended the North Dakota Fireman's convention that same year and began an active involvement at the state level. Monk was active in just about every facet of North Dakota's fire fighting efforts. He served on the Beach Fire Department for 53 years, with 25 of those being the chief. He held state offices over a span of 41 years, 37 years of which were spent as the North Dakota Firefighters Association secretary. Monk felt his biggest contribution was as a lobbyist for the development of Rural Fire Districts. Monk was a man to be reckoned with at the Capital. A friend and lobbying colleague, Joe Boesplug, says that when he and Monk would walk down the halls of the Capital, legislators would

comment, "Here comes the old man and the kid." (Monk being the old man). Monk was outspoken, honest, and determined to change things and get rural areas fire protection. Monk had ideas and he knew what he was talking about. There was never a dull moment when Monk was on task. Because of Monk, laws were passed enabling rural communities options for organizing and funding firefighting districts. When Monk would lobby or attend meetings, he always carried big notebooks, and he would deliver his information with a certain, unmistakable cadence to his voice. And no state meeting was complete until Monk had read the roll call of fire districts and their vote count; "Beach has 14 votes, Beach 14"...and so on. Monk also would train on a national level and bring that training back to North Dakota and later, to a four state region, training firefighters in the latest and best firefighting techniques. Monk knew the importance of fire protection and loved his work in this field. On a local level, Monk loved to educate children. To demonstrate how quickly a fire could start, Monk built a model home that exploded and the roof blew off and the model started on fire. Monk knew how to make a point. He felt it was important for all to be educated to the dangers of fire and how to prevent fire. Donald "Monk" Gilman was honored by the North Dakota Firefighters Association as one of six of the first inductees into the North Dakota Firefighter's Hall of Fame. Monk's right hand helper, his wife Loma, was also recognized for her time and efforts. Monk always credited Loma with the work she did and told everyone how he "couldn't have done it without her." Firefighting has become a family tradition, encompassing four generations. First was Monk's father, Tom, then Monk, and now Monk's son, Bob and grandson, J.T., and granddaughter, Lindsay, also are firefighters. One story that Loma and son, Bob, tell on Monk and his being a fireman is about when the fire call would come in. They had a special fire phone in the entryway of their home. When it rang, you better not be near it or you got ran over by Monk. He never answered the phone; he'd just race out the door. Loma would answer and yell at him where the fire was as he ran down the driveway. The dog, Prince, would run after Monk to the firehall, biting Monk in the butt the

whole way. It was quite a picture! Don Hardy remembers the Fireman's Ball being a big event in Beach. Monk would come around selling tickets. He would stand there with that grin on his face and ask if anyone wanted to buy fire insurance. The message being "buy a ticket and we will come and put out a fire at your house." Monk sold a lot of tickets. Monk's other passion was the veterans and the American Legion. He was a driving force in Beach's American Legion Club. Monk began his involvement after returning home from World War II. He noticed that the soldiers who had died in the war were being brought home on the train and delivered to their families with no proper ceremony given to the soldiers for their service to their country. Monk was instrumental in organizing a drill team of 25 to 30 volunteers of veterans to meet the trains and put on a ceremony honoring the fallen soldiers. Monk was devoted to the team and was the drill sergeant. They would practice at night and Monk never missed a session. They became quite good at the drills and began to perform at parades in addition to veterans funerals. Officially known as the XGI Beach Drill Team, their unofficial name and the name on their banner and business cards was "Sons of Beach!" The drill team traveled all across the nation performing at conventions, even having in one audience, President Nixon and his wife, Pat. Monk remembers this occasion well, as he got close enough to the First Lady to hand her one of their cards and witness her reaction. It pleased Monk immensely to do that. Harvey Peterson reminds us that Monk was the unpaid volunteer handyman who repaired and maintained this club. If you look around, you will see Monk everywhere in this building. In the words of a fellow Son of Beach, Don Brengle, Monk was "a full-time legionnaire and dedicated to everything he did." Being involved with the firefighters and the drill team kept Monk on the road a great deal of the time. He would head out with his notebooks and a huge mug of coffee. He would call home often to visit with Loma, his son Bob and daughter, Rita. Monk would break out of meetings and socials, telling people that Beach only had one phone and it was his family's night to use it and he knew they were standing there waiting for him to call. Yes, Monk wanted to get his turn in and

not make the others who also had a turn at the phone that night have to wait on him. Monk had many believing that Beach only had one phone. Every time he came home from a trip, he would bring Rita and Bob some trinket. Monk loved kids, especially his own. He was very proud of his kids and grandkids and their endeavors. Monk would talk of their accomplishments and show pictures of his grandkids to his friends. Loma tells that no matter how tired Monk would be at the end of a work day, he would light up when he walked in the door and would play with his kids. Nieces and nephews loved coming to stay in the summer because Monk and Loma made them feel so welcome. Bob recalls Sundays as the day to look forward to. Monk did not work and would spend time with his family. As Bob grew up, he would work with his father, and as is typical, would get impatient with Monk when Monk would go out of his way to deliver some small thing to someone when Bob wanted to get home to play ball. Monk would remind him of the importance of those seemingly small needs being taken care of. Loma recalls countless times when people would call during the night for help with things that didn't work, or fear of intruders. Instead of calling other family in town or the authorities, they called Monk, because he always would go and take care of any problem, big or small, for anyone, at anytime. When Rita's husband died, Monk encouraged her to just take one step forward at a time and keep on going. Her father was her rock and biggest support at that difficult time. Monk was always sensitive to others problems and was one of the first to offer support and a kind word. With his big grin and humorous stories, people enjoyed having him around. Sometimes you couldn't be quite sure of his humor, but you knew he liked you if he picked on you. He loved to laugh with you and he would laugh at himself. Once when Monk, Joe Boespflug, and a couple others were in Memphis for meetings, they went to see Elvis' mansion. Upon leaving, Monk was sure he could get them "home." They were following Monk's directions to get back to the hotel, but noticed that they were in what appeared to be a gated area. Monk had gotten them "home" alright, they had arrived at a

prison. Steve Baertsch laughingly tells about Monk preparing them for a 21 gun salute. They ended up firing four times instead of the standard three times. After that they always checked with Monk to see how many bullets he was giving them for that day's salute. Monk did not just handle guns in the service and on the drill team. Monk was a hunter. Big game; birds, rabbits; Monk really enjoyed hunting. He always shot his animal last. One theory was that it was his generous nature to let others in the hunting party have a chance to get their animals. Bob maintains that his father just wanted to see what he had to beat to get the biggest. A group of hunters, including Monk, were featured in a hunting magazine years ago. After talking about all the deer the hunters got it was summed up with the appropriate words, "and then there is Monk's muley." Taken last, Monk shot a trophy mule deer and the article featured a picture of "Monk's muley." Another favorite way Monk loved to spend his time was woodworking. He was a perfectionist about it and built beautiful furniture for family and friends. He had a terrible time charging for his work. He would charge for materials but say his time wasn't worth anything. He was known around Beach as the "fix-it man", doing repairs and remodels for many in the community. Monk would let you help him in his shop until you made a mistake and then you were done working on that project. If you reached over the table saw putting yourself in danger, you could be banned from the shop for weeks. And heaven forbid if you cleaned or moved things. Monk did not appreciate that. He knew where everything was and he reveled in his sawdust. He was an artist with wood. Monk loved to listen to Rush Limbaugh. He could quote Rush better than Rush could quote himself. Monk's favorite drink, when he did drink, was Jim Beam and sour; his favorite foods were ribs, chili, lasagna and pumpkin pie. Rita kept her parent's freezer full of apple pies for Loma and pumpkin pies for Monk. He loved to play gin rummy. And his hat collection, well... too many to count. As you entered today, you may have noticed a cedar table that Monk built. On the table are some things important to Monk which represent some of his favorites in life, and have been displayed there to honor and pay tribute to the man he was. As for the great

loves of his life, they sit right here, Loma, Rita, and Bob and all of Monk's family. For they have always been most important to Monk. And if Monk were standing here today, looking at his family now, his comment would be "Why am I so lucky?" Recently, Monk took a fall and hit his head. Loma and Rita noticed that something wasn't quite right with Monk. They were right. Tests showed that Monk had bleeding on the left side of his brain putting pressure on the right side. Monk's age was certainly against him, but because of his good physical condition the doctor recommended surgery. Monk came through the surgery and for 24 hours the old Monk was back. Then there was a problem at the base of his skull and the outlook was bad. The nurse told Bob, Monk would probably only last an hour or so. Bob knew his father and if they said one hour, it would be five. A few hours later that night, Bob was sitting with his father, when a storm came through. There was a big flash of lightning and a huge clap of thunder and Monk died. The storm passed quietly. Monk had went out with a bang. There is a verse written by L.L. Elrod and the last line certainly seems to fit Donald "Monk" Gilman. "at living, this man was a success." Let us now view a video tribute prepared by Monk's family to honor him today. Video Tribute Donald "Monk" Gilman Tribute Video from Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home on Vimeo. Celebrant: At this time there are a couple of members of this community who friends of Monk and his family who wish to speak to you of Monk. Bev Wolff will be first, followed by Gary Braden. Following our speakers, "How Great Thou Art" will be played by Melissa Schillo and sung by Carla Steffen Speakers: Bev Wolff and Gary Braden Song: "How Great thou Art" by Melissa Schillo Closing: Celebrant It is an important day when we stop to bear witness to a person's life and times among us, the difference his living and dying made among family and community and to take time to express our grief, our hope, our wonder, and our memories. It is here that we show honor to the memories of a life that touched us and remains alive in our hearts. Loma, Rita, Bob, and family, touched though you are with sadness and grief from losing Monk, as you consider Monk's life, you have many memories both happy and sad. That

Monk has lived, what Monk has experienced can never be taken from him or from you. As your friends and community, we grieve with you and we grieve for you, and we thank you for sharing Monk with us. In talking of Monk today, more was left unsaid than was said. Please continue to share your memories of Monk with the family today and in the coming weeks and months. Monk's 90 years of life and his numerous accomplishments have touched many lives and will continue to touch generations to come. The example by which he lived life is a gift to us all and a legacy to be treasured by his family. The presence of all of you here today, is in itself quite a tribute to Monk. Thank you all for being here for this important time. As we exit today, let us walk in procession to the veteran's memorial for the ceremonies and military honors for Donald "Monk" Gilman. We will conclude Monk's life tribute service with the reading of a Masonic Prayer by Monk's nephew, Clark Wheeling.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Donald E. "Monk" Gilman*

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December 07, 2022 at 04:10 PM