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McELROY, Gilbert (Gib)

March 5, 1924 - May 30, 2020

Gib passed peacefully in his sleep, at the age of 96. He died of natural causes at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre, his home for the past seven years. That was a quiet end for a man who had, in his own words, "survived damn near everything!" Ottawa-born and raised, he joined the RCAF in 1942 and became a tail-gunner on Lancaster bombers. Shot down over Belgium, he spent the last year of World War II in a German Prisoner of War camp. Back in Canada after the war, he eventually became a fireman, shovelling coal on steam engines for Canadian National Railway. During his time with CNR, he was in a major train crash. Years later, he was in several car crashes. He walked away from them all. For the last 30 years of his working life, he sold cars, primarily for Turpin Pontiac Buick.

In retirement, he curled in winter and golfed in summer. He and his partner Theresa played for years at the Edgewood Club in Ottawa, then in Arnprior. He golfed happily until he was 88.

One of his proudest personal lifetime accomplishments was his 60-plus years as a dedicated Alcoholics Anonymous member. He was well-known throughout Eastern Ontario as a speaker and mentor for those who needed him. He also volunteered diligently for the RCAF Prisoner of War Association, organizing many events for his fellow former POWs in the Ottawa area. Carrying forward his love of helping, he still wanted to be involved when he became a resident of the Perley. He became President of the Veterans' Residents Association. In that post, representing Canada's war veterans, he met former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, provincial premiers and foreign dignitaries.

As he wrote in the flyleaf of the book *Boys at War*, written by fellow aircrew member Russell Margerison, the story of his World War II years, "We flew, we fell, we lived." -- Gib

He is survived by his partner of 40 years, Theresa Lavigueur, his daughters Kerry Tremblay (Lee) of Calgary, and Patricia Wilson (widow of Jeff), of Ottawa. His middle daughter, Jane Aubrey (Steve), predeceased him in 2003.

He is also survived by seven adult grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren: Robin Churchill (Jason) and their children Dominic and Jasmine; Jennifer Tremblay (Gord Ross) and their children CJ, Nick and Darcy; Joe Aubrey (Shana) and their children Lily, Caroline and JJ; Stephanie Gillespie (Justin) and their daughter Felicity; and Pamela, Kyle and Krista Wilson. Adding in his parents, Gib was privileged to know five generations of his lineage.

Donations may be made in his honour to the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation, 1750 Russell Road, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 5Z6.