



Merle Donald Gilliland

January 10, 1937 - March 31, 2022

Merle D. Gilliland was born January 10, 1937, in Flippin, Arkansas as the fourth child to Simon

and Marie Gilliland. The family relocated to Tehachapi, California in the 1940s, where they continued to grow and where they welcomed three more children. Merle returned to Arkansas for

college, then continued his education at California Polytechnical State University San Luis Obispo, where he graduated with a degree in Architecture.

In 1954, the Gilliland family moved to Bakersfield, California, where they made a warm and

welcoming home next door to the Baker family. In meeting the young lady next door, it was clear that Merle had met his love and soulmate, Betty Baker. Merle and Betty were married on

December 21, and began an incredible journey through life together.

After completing college, the newlyweds moved back to Bakersfield, where they had their first

two daughters, Lisa and Lora. Merle's job with Dreyfus and Blackford moved the family to Sacramento, where they had their third and final child, Lynette.

In 1969, the Gilliland family moved to the San Francisco Bay Area as Merle continued his work

in architecture working on the design of the San Francisco International Airport. In 1971, the

family settled on Tharp Drive in Moraga, California, where they built a loving home and formed

lifelong friendships. Merle was the president of the Moraga Community Association and began

the drive to incorporate Moraga in order to avoid a freeway going through town. In 1974, the

City of the Town of Moraga was incorporated and Merle, along with four others, were on the

original city council and formatted the city plans, laws, and established the police

department.

Merle was on the council for two terms and served as mayor in 1976. Merle and the original city council were presented a certification plaque by then Governor Ronald Reagan. On May 25,

1976, Merle met with, and later publicly presented a medallion to, President Ford. That medallion is now one of the curator's favorite displays at President Ford's Library in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Merle was predeceased by his mother and father Simon and Marie Gilliland, along with his daughter Lora and his brothers Jimmy, Wayne, Greg and sister Eileen. He is survived by his wife

of 64 years, Betty, and his daughters Lisa Furrie (Ethan), Lynette Donahue (Mick), and son in

law John Holmes. His love and pride in his grandchildren Tom Parks (Angela), Wayne Furrie

(Deyin), Tyler Bettencourt, Aimee Furrie (John Grice), Deverie Engels (Graham), David Donahue (Caitlin Judge), and Katie Holmes (James Taylor) was unparalleled as was his adoration for his five great grandchildren.

Merle undoubtedly had impressive accomplishments throughout his career, as he found opportunities to serve and care for every community in which he and his family came to reside.

As an unwavering man of faith, he led with humility and compassion. For those who were blessed to know him, his unflinching love of God, his country, and his family stand out as some of

his most defining and meaningful traits.

Outside of his work, Merle thoroughly enjoyed life. He was frequently outdoors, making memories with friends and family members while hunting, fishing, rafting, and other recreational

activities. As one always willing to help, he was an involved participant in many meaningful life

moments for those he loved. Through both challenging and joyous moments, Merle created

levity through laughter, bringing smiles to those around him. It is through those relationships and

memories that Merle's legacy will proudly and confidently live on.

There will be a Celebration of Merle's life at the First Presbyterian Church, 30 South Pacific

Street, Dillon, Montana on Wednesday, April 6 at 11:00 AM. The family asks for any

donations

to go to the First Presbyterian Church in Dillon for the Kids to Camp Scholarship Program.

Merle found joy in participating in this program.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

APR 6. 11:00 AM (MT)

First Presbyterian Church
30 South Pacific
Dillon, MT 59725

Tribute Wall

DK

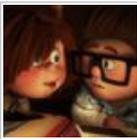
“ I was shocked yesterday to read in the East Bay Times that Merle had passed. I then realized that Merle & I had not shared a linked-in message for awhile. I believe the last one included a picture of Merle on a fishing boat on some river or lake.in WA state or Idaho?

Merle and I served together on the Board of the Contra Costa Council (now the East Bay Leadership Council) back in the late 90's, & often saw each other while lunching at Mike's Deli in Walnut Creek. My son Tim also joined us for some good stories at the Deli.

When Merle moved to Spokane, he often emailed & offered to go buy tickets for us for a pending St.Mary's vs Gonzaga basketball game. I regret not having been able to free up time to make the trip north and join Merle to see the Gaels beat the Zags there!

Margo & I remember well the hospitality during a Holiday party at the Moraga home years ago. Very gracious and enjoyable. Our condolences to Betty and all the family. RIP,
Dave, Margo & Tim Kelly

DAVID KELLY - April 11 at 01:46 AM



“ Today will be a difficult day for our family as we say goodbye to our Dad, Granddad and Great Granddad. I pray today we will find laughter and tears as we remember dad. Please cover our family in prayer.

Lisa Furrrie - April 06 at 11:20 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Merle Donald Gilliland.



April 06 at 07:30 AM