



Orval Neal Gilbert

May 12, 1940 - November 3, 2024

Orval Neal Gilbert was born in Centerville, TN on May 12, 1940 to the late Nettie Marie and Ollie Neal Gilbert. He passed away in Nashville, TN on November 3, 2024 at the age of 84.

In addition to his parents, Neal is preceded in death by his daughter, Amanda Gilbert; brother, Nolan Gilbert; and sisters, Maureen Stoltz Dozier, Virgie Estes, Elva Pearl Gilbert, and Wilma Gilbert.

Neal is survived by his wife of 63 years, Patricia O'Guin Gilbert; daughters, Patrice Bratton (Tim) of Columbia, TN, Shela Chessor (John Mark) of Centerville, TN, Melanie Freeman (Teryl) of Brushy, TN; sisters, Hilda Durham (Gene), Laura Jo McMahan (Jim), brother, Norval Gilbert (Annie); as well as four grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren with twin great-grandchildren on the way.

Neal's life was marked by his industrious spirit—constructing, crafting, and making something meaningful out of everything he took on. Fittingly, Neal's first jobs out of high school were in manufacturing, beginning with Kenneth M. Wilson, who produced supplies for the U.S. Army. Then he later moved to the Genesco company, where he worked for several more years. He later trained as an industrial electrician, spending over two decades with Consolidated Aluminum.

Neal was a devoted husband, marrying his wife Patricia in 1961. By 1965, they had welcomed three daughters – Patrice, Shela, and Melanie – and in 1976 they had Amanda Gilbert, who was better known as “Mandy” by many. As a father, Neal was both patient and principled, instilling in his girls the importance of kindness, thrift, and a steadfast “we will figure it out” attitude that he carried on to the end. He never once had a negative outlook on life.

A ferocious reader, Neal absorbed knowledge across a diverse range of topics and retained much of what he learned. His interest in local history, plants, and wildlife allowed him to identify nearly any plant he encountered. He loved nature and music, particularly artists like John Denver and The Eagles. He began playing guitar and singing with friends in 1999. This pastime became a lifelong hobby. Neal was always musically inclined and, at one point when his girls were young, took up crafting dulcimers, which he sold at craft fairs in Grinders Switch and Hohenwald.

His crafting skills expanded to a very successful grapevine business years later, selling at the Nashville Flea Market and eventually supplying other businesses. He did this for 14 years. When he sold their farm on Swan Creek, he passed this business along with it but continued to frequent flea markets, known for his unique finds, honesty, and fair price. Neal had a knack for collecting old tools and relics of the past, delighting in sharing their histories and near-forgotten uses.

Neal’s life was one of constant building and improvement. At each property he and his family moved to, he erected chicken coops, gardens, barns, and also improved the home. At 80 years old, he even built his last home that overlooks the beautiful Duck River, managing much of the work himself. An independent, self-sufficient spirit, he was a role model and admired by many. To those who knew him, Neal Gilbert was one of a kind—a man who will never

be replicated, can never be replaced, and will always be loved by his family to eternity.

A visitation, funeral service and burial for Orval Neal Gilbert will be held at Chessor Cemetery on Thursday, November 7, 2024. Visitation under the pavilion will begin at 1pm with the service to be held at 3pm. Burial to follow. Casual attire is encouraged - that is how Neal would have wanted it

McDonald Funeral Home is honored to be serving the Gilbert Family

Cemetery Details

Chessor Cemetery

Centerville, TN 37033
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/yWgRoxv3crynDU9CA>
A

Previous Events

Visitation

NOV 7. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CT)

Chessor Cemetery
Centerville, TN 37033
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/yWgRoxv3crynDU9CA>

Graveside Service

NOV 7. 3:00 PM (CT)

Chessor Cemetery
Centerville, TN 37033
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/yWgRoxv3crynDU9CA>

Tribute Wall

AG

“ Alex Gilbert lit a candle in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert



Alex Gilbert - February 14, 2025 at 08:09 PM

VR

“ What a kind, loving man who will be missed more than my words can express here. I always looked forward to seeing Neal and Patricia at 'Friday Nite Music' at the library. It was so much fun to play along with him. His love of music was vast and he so loved to share it. Truly a treasure. My deepest condolences to Patricia and the entire Gilbert family. I am so grateful to have gotten to know him. May warm memories comfort you at this time. I'm so sorry...

Victoria Rosario - December 06, 2024 at 04:07 PM

NN

“ Nolan Jr. Last time I saw him I was 18 I'm 65 now he's my uncle . I wish I would have kept in touch hang out with my Dad and have a good time

Nolan Gilbert Jr. nephew - November 23, 2024 at 02:48 PM

JP

“ We always loved Mr. Neal. From young days with all of the girls to walting on him frequently for his hardware projects! Great friend!
Randy and Joni Prince



Joni Prince - November 19, 2024 at 08:18 PM



“ *How sad to hear of the passing of Neal Gilbery. My big surprise is his age. We must have been in school together!
At the opening of The Sears store many years ago, we won a TV that was special to us for many years.
It was such a joy to see he and Patricia dancing. They were fantastic.
We shared the status as parents of four daughters. I did not realize to whom they were married.
Patricia, there are hard days ahead, but many you find comfort in your memories.*

Bea Jobe - November 11, 2024 at 08:35 AM

LG

“ *I came to know Neil in 2029 when I was taken to Hardee's in Centerville to play some music. Neal was the first pro to approach and welcome me. I truly admired Neal for his vast amount of knowledge and experiences. He always had a smile on his face and a welcoming handshake whenever we met. That one chance meeting turned into 9 yrs of music every Friday night. Neal you will be sorely missed by your family and friends. Patricia my thoughts and prayer are with you all during this time.*

Lou Gann

Lou Gann - November 07, 2024 at 07:41 PM

TO

“ *Tommie lit a candle in memory of Orval Gilbert*



Tommie - November 07, 2024 at 02:30 PM

CH

“ *Charlene Hall lit a candle in memory of Orval Gilbert*



Charlene Hall - November 07, 2024 at 10:42 AM

RM

“ *A fairly recent memory, opening my back door to my sweet Uncle Neal with a box and a bucket full of amazing home grown veggies for me. He was such a kind, caring, soft spoken, generous, loving and beautiful soul. Truly a rare gem. Heaven certainly gained one of the best ones ever. I have such love and respect for him and the family he created. Just beautiful salt of the earth people.*

Robin Mckennon - November 06, 2024 at 08:26 PM

CM

“ *Cheeva McClearen lit a candle in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert*



Cheeva McClearen - November 06, 2024 at 06:20 PM

FF

“ *Neil was a class mate of mine . Such a nice student in class and that carried on in his life . Rest in peace Neil.*



fern Fisher - November 06, 2024 at 02:43 PM

RG

“ *Ronald Gammons lit a candle in memory of Orval Gilbert*



Ronald Gammons - November 06, 2024 at 02:35 PM

JJ

“ *Such a wonderful, kind man. We could use more Mr. Neal's in this world.*

Jen Jacobs - November 06, 2024 at 01:42 PM

BM

“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with Patricia and all the family! May you find comfort with your good memories!*



Bobby/Sandy McFarlin - November 06, 2024 at 01:10 PM

VJ

“ *vicky Hill James lit a candle in memory of Orval Gilbert*



vicky Hill James - November 06, 2024 at 10:43 AM

CC

“ Carson Chessor lit a candle in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert



carson chessor - November 06, 2024 at 09:50 AM

SS

“ Shirley Staggs lit a candle in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert



Shirley Staggs - November 06, 2024 at 08:59 AM

FW

“ Felicia Wilbanks sent a virtual gift in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert



Felicia Wilbanks - November 06, 2024 at 07:25 AM

VB

“ Vic Willis & Shawna Bowman lit a candle in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert



Vic Willis & Shawna Bowman - November 06, 2024 at 06:29 AM

MS

“ To all the Gilbert family, we send our condolences. May you find peace and comfort through God, friends, and family.
Barry, Melissa, and Ashley Shelton



MELISSA SHELTON - November 05, 2024 at 10:40 PM

DS

“ From the time I met Mr.Neal, I knew he was a kind man. I enjoyed talking to him, any time I ran into him. To Patricia and his daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren...My deepest condolences. I know he will be missed.



Debbie Semore - November 05, 2024 at 09:43 PM

RS

“ Renee Shepard sent a virtual gift in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert



Renee Shepard - November 05, 2024 at 09:07 PM



“ Sandi Westover lit a candle in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert



Sandi Westover - November 05, 2024 at 08:17 PM

RM

“ Roy & Sharon McCoy lit a candle in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert



Roy & Sharon McCoy - November 05, 2024 at 07:44 PM

RM

“ I went to school with Orval. In fact, I am 1 day older than him. I went to school also with Norval and Laura Jo, who til this day is one of my dearest friends!!! My love, prayers and sympathy to all of Orval's great family.

Reba McFarlin - November 05, 2024 at 07:16 PM

LC

“ Neil, was always kind and very helpful. We will miss you. Matt and Liz



Liz Christian - November 05, 2024 at 06:47 PM

RB

“ Randall-Sandra Barber lit a candle in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert



Randall-Sandra Barber - November 05, 2024 at 06:39 PM

SA

“ Knew Neal long time, play music a little bit with him. He was a very fine man. He loved his family. Love to the family.

Steve Atkinson - November 05, 2024 at 05:55 PM

EW

“ Evet Jenkins Willis lit a candle in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert



Evet Jenkins willis - November 05, 2024 at 05:54 PM

MB

“ Martha And William Butler lit a candle in memory of Orval Neal Gilbert



Martha and William Butler - November 05, 2024 at 05:11 PM

RC

“ Truly, a great man and for the years we lived as neighbors- an awesome teacher and friend. My deepest condolences to the family and our community.

Rodney Chandler - November 05, 2024 at 04:29 PM

SG

“ We are so sorry for your loss. We have lots of good memories of Mr. Neal and Ms. Patricia and we always enjoyed talking to them. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you. He will be missed!



Stanley & Judy Gordon - November 05, 2024 at 04:18 PM

JP

“ I sure will miss Mr. Neal coming in the store! I loved him. Very sad!

Joni Prince - November 05, 2024 at 03:49 PM

TC

“ Teresa Carroll lit a candle in memory of Orval Gilbert



Teresa Carroll - November 05, 2024 at 03:43 PM

DB

“ Dale Burlison lit a candle in memory of Orval Gilbert



Dale Burlison - November 05, 2024 at 03:37 PM



“ Betty Love lit a candle in memory of Orval Gilbert



Betty Love - November 05, 2024 at 03:24 PM



“ MICHAEL BATES sent a virtual gift in memory of Orval Gilbert



MICHAEL BATES - November 05, 2024 at 03:20 PM



“ Karen Bowen lit a candle in memory of Orval Gilbert



Karen Bowen - November 05, 2024 at 02:49 PM



“ Steven & Anita Armstrong lit a candle in memory of Orval Gilbert



Steven & Anita Armstrong - November 05, 2024 at 02:18 PM

RH

“ *We are thinking of you.*

Rex & Ruby Horner - November 05, 2024 at 01:25 PM

RS

“ *We are thinking of you. He always had time to talk. Will keep his family in our prayers.*

Regina & Martha Shelton - November 05, 2024 at 01:21 PM

MS

“ *Melinda Sullivan lit a candle in memory of Orval Gilbert*



Melinda Sullivan - November 05, 2024 at 01:12 PM

CS

“ *Charlotte M Staggs lit a candle in memory of Orval Gilbert*



Charlotte M Staggs - November 05, 2024 at 01:07 PM