

Gilbert and Eugenia Bovard Scholarship

The Gilbert and Eugenia Bovard Scholarship, established in 2012, is dedicated to assisting a Mason City High School student who has demonstrated a commitment to scholarship, athletics, and civic responsibility. Gil and Genie showed these character traits throughout their lives.

The Bovards, Mason City and Clear Lake residents since 1951, raised four MCHS graduates, Ralph (1971), Sally (1972), Doug (1975), and Scott (1976). Genie was the artistic influence in the family while Gil was known for his robust participation in sporting activities at an age when most of his peers had hung up their cleats. In recent years, Gil and Genie played in the New Horizons Band, Gil on flute and Genie on glockenspiel.

Genie was born in Minneapolis in 1926. Her father was a dentist and her mother was one of the first nursing students to graduate from the University of Minnesota in 1912. Following the family tradition, Genie graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1949 with degrees in dental hygiene and art. After graduation, she traveled across the southern United States for a year providing dental care to poor and needy children and families. An accomplished pianist, she played until arthritis forced her to quit, but was able to continue enjoying music with the glockenspiel. Genie was an accomplished painter and sculptor, and her talents were recently on display at the Clear Lake Art Center. An active volunteer for many years, she helped at the MacNider Art Museum in Mason City, the Clear Lake Art Center, and as a children's reading buddy. Genie was a tender-hearted woman and a gentle soul who died quietly in her sleep in the summer of 2011 at the age of 84.

Born in 1927 in Sierra Madre, CA, Gilbert (Gil) Klemme Bovard had strong roots in California as his great uncles were the first and fourth presidents of the University of Southern California (USC), and his grandfather was an executive and pastor in Methodist Episcopal Church. Gil moved to the Midwest to live with his aunt and uncle, Ralph and Jessie (Klemme) Stanbery, after his father, a pediatrician, caught tuberculosis while practicing medicine. Gil was adopted by his aunt and uncle when his father died in 1936, and he graduated from MCHS in 1945. Gil's mother, Ruth (Klemme) Bovard, was a member of the Klemme family who founded the town by the same name west of Mason City. As a youth, Gil was active in band, an honor student, and an Eagle Scout. He served at the Great Lakes Naval Station during World War II, then enrolled at the University of Minnesota where he met Eugenia Ulvestad in 1947. He finished his undergraduate degree (in 3 years) at Pomona College in California, and then enrolled in the School of Law at the University of Iowa. Gil and Genie were married in 1951. Gil practiced law for 31 years until 1983 when he was appointed as a State of Iowa District Court Judge. He served in this role for an additional 22 years until mandatory retirement at age 78 in 2005. He served on the Mason City Community School Board from 1966 until 1978, and served as board president for part of that time.

Always up for new experiences, Gil remains highly active to this day. He earned his black belt in judo at age 40, played on the River City rugby state champion team at age 54, and started ice hockey at age 60. Gil continues to live at the family home on the south shore of Clear Lake with his dog Gibby and cat Shadow.

Both Gil and Genie were committed to the value of education and the vital role of the schools and community in fostering healthy minds and bodies, and their children wanted to honor them with the Gilbert and Eugenia Bovard Scholarship. This scholarship will help MCHS students get a strong start on their college experience. The 2012 recipient of the Gil and Genie Bovard Scholarship was Maddison Dodd.