



## Robert Johan van Gilst

May 2, 1935 - January 19, 2016

Robert van Gilst of East Wenatchee, WA passed away January 19, 2016, in his home. Robert Johan van Gilst was born in The Hague in 1935 to Simon van Gilst and Joann Van De Geest. Two years later, his brother, Hans, was born. When Robert was five years old, the German's invaded Holland. He witnessed the atrocities of that war through the eyes of a child. He was ten years old when the war ended and four short years later, he lost his father, Simon, to unrelenting illness. In 1950, his family moved to Australia. His uncles were the first to apply and come to America in the early 1950's. In 1956, his uncles sponsored his mother Joann, his step-dad John, and his brother Hans so that they too, could come to America. In 1958, Joann decided it was time for her oldest son to join them and she sponsored Robert. He boarded a ship in Australia and three weeks later, he was with his family in America. One year after arriving in America, Robert was drafted into the U.S. Army. After serving his country, he returned home to Washington. He worked with his mother and brother in a small bar, which his mother owned, in North Bend. In 1965, he met Shirley Dear and told her, "I'm going to marry you;" in 1967 they were married. One year later, they had a daughter, Johanna (Joannie). After his

mother sold her business in North Bend and went into the hotel industry, Robert went to work as a chief in Seattle. His wife, Shirley, was a housekeeper in a local hotel. In 1976, Robert and his brother decided to go into business themselves and bought a small motel in Quincy, WA. Robert, his wife, Shirley and their daughter, Joannie left their home in Seattle and came to the Quincy Valley. The family owned and operated the Villager Inn Motel for more than 25 years. Robert also worked various side jobs including 11 years at Lamb Weston. When Robert and Shirley decided to retire, they moved to East Wenatchee. Eventually, Robert and his family decided to give up the business and sold the motel in 2002. Robert and Shirley stayed in East Wenatchee. Robert and Shirley enjoyed their retirement traveling in their RV. They spent winters as snowbirds in Arizona and summers enjoying their grandchildren. Robert lost his battle with COPD on January 19, 2016. He passed away at home with his wife, Shirley, by his side.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Joan Biever; his brother, Hans; his uncles, Bob van De Geest and Ed van De Geest; his aunts, Ellie van De Geest and Laney. Robert is survived by his wife, Shirley; their daughter, Joannie Kaiser and her husband, Scott Kaiser and their three children: Amber Johnston, Madison Kaiser and John Robert Kaiser. Robert is also survived by his three step- children: Debbie Jenkins, her daughter and her four children; David Peckham, his five children and eight grandchildren; and Steve Peckham and his wife, Cindy Peckham, their two children and one grandchild.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Friday, February 19, 2016 at 11:00 a.m. at Telford's Chapel of the Valley. Concluding services will follow at

Evergreen Memorial Park. Memorial donations may be made to the American Lung Association. Arrangements are by Telford's Chapel of the Valley, East Wenatchee.

# Tribute Wall



“ *You will be greatly missed, may you rest in peace.* ”

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**Cathy Purdom** - February 17, 2016 at 12:29 AM