



Chester "Chet" Gilbert

December 23, 1932 - November 29, 2023

Chester "Chet" Gilbert, 90, of Petersburg, Illinois, passed away on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, at St. John's Hospital in Springfield with his family by his side. He was born December 23, 1932, in Supply, Arkansas, to Bishop Herschel and Bertha (Cox) Gilbert. He married Sharon Hunt in Abingdon, Illinois on February 27, 1954, and would have celebrated their 70th anniversary next year.

Chet spent his early years along the Mississippi River in Oquawka, Illinois where he enjoyed fishing and growing his lifelong love of music. While living in Abingdon, he worked as a supervisor for Gale Products in Galesburg, and in advertising sales for WAIK radio. He is probably best remembered as the founder and president of the Illinois Country Opry just south of Petersburg from 1969 to 1979. He brought many Nashville country music stars of the era to Menard County, including Mel Tillis, Jimmy Dean, the Statler Brothers, Loretta Lynn, Barbara Mandrell and Dolly Parton. After the opry closed, Chet became an over-the-road trucker, and was awarded as a "million mile safe driver" by Pre-Fab Transit in Farmer City. After retirement, he worked part-time as a driver for Menard Ambulance and delivered RV's from manufacturers to dealerships all across the U.S. He enjoyed time in his workshop, building rustic birdhouses and donating the proceeds to the Menard County Food Pantry. He especially enjoyed coffee with friends at Hardees. Chet loved God, family and country (and chicken wings!)

Chet is survived by his wife Sharon, daughter Pam (Mark) Fisher; daughter-in-law Dara Gilbert; grandchildren Joy (Don) Wilbur, Misty (Trevor) Duncan, Jenny (Bimal) Vyas, Kristy (Gerald) Wilson, Daniel Gilbert, Gina (Drew) Foster, Robin (Dan) Grohmann, and Curtis (Laura) Fisher; great-grandchildren Kaitlyn, Sydney, Macie, Akhil, Raina, Charlotte, Enzi, Hollis, Scott, Ian, Sela, Flint, Ezekial, Willow and Zurianna.

He was preceded in death by his son James "Jamie" Gilbert, his parents, twin brother Lester Gilbert, brothers Dick, Bob, Jake, and Tom Gilbert, and sisters Nelma Tatum, Anna Robinson, Emily Boughton, and Aline Shotts.

A memorial gathering will be held on Tuesday, December 5, 2023, at the First Baptist Church in Petersburg from 10:00 am to 11:00 am. The memorial service will immediately follow with Pastor Rob Gallion officiating. A private family committal service will be held at Rose Hill Cemetery at a later date.

Memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association or the American Diabetes Association.

Please visit Chet's online obituary at hurleyfh.com where you are encouraged to share memories and condolences with his family. Hurley Funeral Home in Petersburg is assisting his family with arrangements.

Previous Events

Memorial Gathering

DEC 5. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

First Baptist Church of Petersburg
103 West Sangamon Ave
Petersburg, IL 62675
(217) 632-2488

Memorial Service

DEC 5. 11:00 AM (CT)

First Baptist Church of Petersburg
103 West Sangamon Ave
Petersburg, IL 62675
(217) 632-2488

Tribute Wall



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Chester "Chet" Gilbert.*



December 04, 2023 at 09:19 AM



“ *Joni S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Chester "Chet" Gilbert.*

Joni S. - December 04, 2023 at 09:19 AM



“ *My heartfelt sympathies are with you all. What a reunion there must have been with Jamie! I'll keep you all in my prayers.*

Paula Throckmorton - December 03, 2023 at 08:53 PM



“ *I have so many precious memories of this wonderful man that I will cherish forever, God Bless you Aunt Sharon and Pam. Praying for comfort you.*

sue combs - December 03, 2023 at 02:50 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Chester "Chet" Gilbert.



December 03, 2023 at 09:33 AM



“ I have some of Chets bird houses. When I watch them sway in the breeze I also remember Chets ready smile and twinkle in his eyes. He was a very warm hearted, kind person. My sympathy to all the family. I'm sure he will be greatly missed. Marilyn Blakeley (nurse at Sunny Acres a few years ago)

Marilyn Blakeley - December 02, 2023 at 08:04 PM



“ Our sympathies .. so thankful for the fun times and laughs. Rest in peace Checker babe

Margaret Santos - December 01, 2023 at 09:13 PM



“ Sharon, Pam and Dara and extended family,
What can we say about Chet that you haven't already heard. Chet was such a nice man and he will be missed! Keeping you all in our prayers and thoughts. ❤️🙏
Paul and Marilyn Montgomery

Marilyn Montgomery - December 01, 2023 at 05:38 PM

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“ *Heartfelt sympathies to my childhood friend, Pam, and to all who loved him.* ”

Elaine Shugart Swigart - December 01, 2023 at 05:02 PM