

# Remembering Marie Gilbert

In the early hours of Nov. 2, 2007, St. Andrews lost one of its good friends as Marie Gilbert passed away in Chapel Hill, N.C.

A poet and longtime supporter of creative arts in the state, Gilbert had read just three weeks earlier at the St. Andrews Writers' Forum alongside her friend Ron Bayes. She was also a particular supporter of St. Andrews in her second term of service with the Board of Trustees.

Gilbert leaves behind her husband of 61 years Richard A. Gilbert; son R. Austin Gilbert Jr. and wife Elizabeth Y. Gilbert; daughter Laurie G. Sanford and husband James Terry Sanford Jr.; brother F. Mandeville Rogers III, four granddaughters and one great-granddaughter.

Her memory was honored during the Nov. 8, 2007 Writers' Forum and during the Feb. 15, 2008 Trustees dinner as the St. Andrews Chamber Choir performed a pair of Gilbert's poems set to music.

A native of Florence, S.C., Gilbert graduated from Rollins College with a dual major in English and Psychology. She received the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Medallion at graduation for "habitually going outside the narrow circle of self-interest and expending her energy in service to others."

She began her teaching experience as a writer-in-residence at Saginaw Valley State University, where she spoke to classes and gave readings in Midland, Mich. Gilbert has also provided workshops and readings in Washington, N.C., at the De Bordieu Colony, for the Blue Heron group and the Spoleto Sun Down Poetry Series in addition to her many appearances at St. Andrews.

Gilbert received the Sam Ragan Fine Arts Award in 1994 and the Ethel N. Fortner Writer and Community Award in 2003. The North Carolina Poetry Society dedicated their Award Winning Poems publication to her in 2001. In both 1987 and 1990 Gilbert won the Lyric Poem Prize awarded by the Poetry Society of South Carolina. She is listed in *Who's Who in*



Marie Gilbert



Richard and Marie Gilbert attend a family graduation in 2004.



Marie Gilbert, third from right, joined the celebration at St. Andrews at the inaugural Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet Series. Pictured are, from left North Carolina Poetry Society Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet Series Chairperson Bill Blackley, Distinguished Poet Larry Wayne Johns, Post-graduate winner Ginger Randolph, high school winner Erin Lopez, Gilbert, community college winner Mollie Carlin and college winner Glenn Kern.

*America, Millennium Edition.*

Gilbert was a founding member of the Greensboro Group and The North Carolina Writers' Network. She published six collections of poetry and her work appeared in numerous anthologies and magazines, including *Crucible*, *Cairn*, *Pembroke Magazine*, and *Word and Witness: One Hundred Years of North Carolina Poetry*.

In 2003, the North Carolina Poetry Society created the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet Series in honor of Gilbert and former North Carolina Poet Laureate Fred Chappell. The series was created to increase outreach, involve students, increase poetry skills, develop new poetry reading venues and opportunities and develop mentorship between students and distinguished poets.

# Tribute to Marie Gilbert

*from Gravity Hill, Volume Four, Spring 2008*

Marie Gilbert. Gracious, generous, kind, extraordinarily insightful. One could go on searching out terms in an attempt to do justice in paying homage to Marie and her memory.

She was, in the words of George Bruce, “a great encourager.” Marie was a fine poet and peerless friend. She encouraged people to appreciate one another. She encouraged writers of all ages and persuasions. By example she taught us to analyze and to empathize. By being a great learner, she taught us by example never to cease from exploration.

Twice the head of the North Carolina Poetry Society, she worked in its ranks for decades and was the originator of the annual Gilbert-Chappell poetry competition. A constant student herself, Marie was a ceaseless champion of learning and of St. Andrews Presbyterian College, on whose Board of Trustees she was an inspiring member. It was my privilege to count her as a friend for nearly four decades.

When her devoted husband, Dick, was called to serve in both World War II and the Korean War, Marie held the fort at home in the tough role of single mom – again the great encourager of two wonderful (and successful) children as well as her husband, fighting in the field in the grimmest of circumstances.

Marie’s hope for the future of humankind never dimmed, nor did her belief in the power of the written and spoken word as useful tools to great ends. Upon her death, the outpouring of sadness was a torrent deeply felt by present and past students of all ages and circumstances whom she had nurtured over the years. Typical of the many dozens that came my way, I must pass along two: a student of several years ago said, “She always left me feeling better about being alive and about being a writer.” And the words of a colleague: “She always asked me how my writing was coming along – even if she was the celebratory reader of the night.”

Marie received both the Sam Ragan Award for contributions to the Fine Arts of North Carolina and the Fortner Writer and Community Award from St. Andrews. She was a constant supporter of *Cairn: The St. Andrews Review*. She was always a pixie of humor, whether performing “Walking to Conway” or dressing up as Uncle Sam on the occasion of St. Andrews Press’ 25th birthday (and singing a celebratory song).

Marie authored numerous books of poetry to high acclaim. It is impossible to do her memory justice...

Ron Bayes  
Writer-in-Residence and  
Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing  
*Emeritus*

## Memories of Marie

“I can remember the first time I met and had the opportunity to talk with Marie. It was wonderful. I even remember the look in her eyes. She had such a gift for capturing the world around her in her writing. She will be deeply missed at SA, I know, and throughout the world. I like to think that when we die, all of the positive energy that we have about us, is displaced throughout the world. If this idea serves us, then Marie’s energy will be a blessing.”

*Parrish Ravelli*  
*Class of 2003*

“Marie Gilbert and I had a lot of obvious things in common – namely an affinity for pearls and kitten heels – but in one of our many conversations about the South, we discovered that we had both at one time lived on the same street in Greenville, South Carolina. I find myself smiling and sending a special thought up to Marie each time I pass by the street sign for the place that connected us outside the boundaries of the St. Andrews campus. I will always remember her, and aspire to her level of dignity and grace.”

*Margaret Mason Tate*  
*Class of 2008*

“Almost every time I saw Marie, it was at Writers’ Forum. Every week we would say hello to each other, and most times we would comment on each other’s outfits. I loved the way she dressed – she always looked so stately but also very approachable – and she had great accessories, too. That was how we connected with each other: through a shared love of style.”

*Caitlin Johnson*  
*Class of 2008*