

TODAY'S QUOTE

"In peace, sons bury fathers. War violates the order of nature and fathers bury sons."

Herodotus, philosopher

Gilmor Weik died 60 years ago, at age 25, aboard a Navy destroyer. But his family's pain still lingers, as they strive to reclaim his memory.



Gilmor Weik (in circle above) knew that he was about to be drafted, so he returned to Minnesota from Seattle and enlisted in the Navy. Before leaving, he bought a new bike for his sister and gave away his prized possessions.

Of loss and longing



Gilmor's father died when Gilmor was just 8. He was raised by his mother, Josie, and grew up close to his younger sister, Arline, pictured with him here. Sixty years after his death, Arline still grieves.



By Troy Melhus
Star Tribune Staff Writer

On the cold Minnesota morning when Gilmor Weik's family learned he was dead, his brother-in-law Arne grabbed his jacket and walked out the door. Nobody knows what he did that day, but

Arne's wife, Arline, Gilmor's younger sister, spent much of it alone.

It was Oct. 21, 1943. Gilmor had enlisted in the Navy during World War II. He died at age 25 aboard the U.S.S. Murphy, a destroyer.

Gil's death so devastated his mother, Josie, a beauty operator in Pelican Rapids, Minn., that she could never again speak his name without crying. Every Memorial Day for 40 years, Josie would sit silently on the Pelican Rapids High School stage as local veterans honored her for her son's sacrifice.

I am two generations removed from Gilmor, my great uncle, yet I still feel the grief. I wish I could have known him, if only to make him proud.

Pelican Rapids is as close as I'll ever get.

Each year, hundreds of residents of the tiny farming community turn out to commemorate Memorial Day. There is a service, parade, jet fly-over and potluck meal at the VFW post.

The Gilmor E. Weik VFW Post.

Gil was the first Pelican Rapids man to die in World War II, but I doubt that's the only reason they named the post after him. Losses in a small town are hard to take. They're

even harder for a tight family. Gilmor was a part of the fabric of this place, an ordinary man from an ordinary town. But he was extraordinary to those who knew him.

Just inside the post is a large painting of Gil, and a plaque that tells the story of his short life.

Few in Pelican Rapids remember much of him now. Like everything in our distant memories, Gilmor has become a blur.

That's why I'm trying so hard to remember him.

A close-knit family

Gil was born on a farm west of Pelican Rapids and baptized at South Immanuel Lutheran Church. The family moved into town about five years later, when Gil's father,

Oscar, became seriously ill and bedridden.

They later moved briefly to St. Paul so Josie could attend the St. Paul Hairdressing Academy. She became a beautician and supported the family.

Gil was 8 when his father died of unknown causes in the back room of Josie's beauty shop in downtown Pelican Rapids. She never remarried. Gil grew up exceptionally close to his mother and sister. Most residents of the small, tight community of 2,000 knew him well.

Cecil Femling, who was a few years behind Gil in high school, remembers an athlete who sailed, fished and played basketball for the Pelican Rapids team. Everett Johnson, who owns the furniture store, remembers a quiet young man who cut wood during the winters in the forests just east of town.

LOSS continues on E6:
— He gave away possessions before he left for war.



Above, Gilmor Weik's war medals. From left: African campaign, Freedom medal, American campaign.

Rude and ruder: the way of the world

By Lisa Irizarry
Newhouse News Service

While one woman was at her husband's trade show, a supplier commented he didn't recognize her because she had "gotten so fat."

When another woman politely told a mortgage telemarketer she does not share her personal financial information over the phone, he told her to "Go to hell!"

A third woman still fumes over the time she waited in a supermarket line as the person ahead of her got stock quotes on her cell phone between her several deli orders.

Pretty rude? Get used to it. Whatever your definition of rudeness — loud cell phone calls, cursing, nervy comments, someone not holding a door for you, "flaming" (angry) e-mails, road rage or waiting for a salesperson to finish a personal conversation — you're probably experiencing a lot more of it.

Psychologists, authors, customer service experts and others not only have found uncivil behavior on the rise in the past few years, but it has become the subject of several studies, with some showing bad behavior is so pervasive it's affecting mental health and the workplace.

"It's everywhere — in cities, small towns. . . . It crosses all cultures, all races, all religions," says Nancy Friedman, a St. Louis-based expert in customer service training and telephone etiquette. Her clients include Wal-Mart and Nordstrom. "I've walked through hallways at corporations and people walk by and don't even say anything to each other anymore."

In his 1999 book, "Bowling Alone," Harvard University Professor Robert Putnam already was talking about incivility as an epidemic — caused in America by the declining sense of community to which automobiles, suburban life and television have contributed.

Two years later, a study conducted by a psychologist at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor found rudeness so pervasive in the American workplace that it was having a serious impact not only on mental health, but also on productivity.

RUDE continues on E6:
— How to handle rude people.

INSIDE

Backfence

James Lileks mulls over a recent encounter with a parking meter. **Turn to E2.**

Kim Ode

Isn't it ironic? A look at the origins of the Pledge of Allegiance turns up some surprising twists. **Turn to E2.**

Orange crunch

Carrots are in the spotlight in Taste. **Turn to E3.**

TOMORROW

Showering Spring

Star Tribune photographer Richard Tsong-Taatarii turns his lens to that budding season.

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The Weik family received a telegram dated Nov. 3, 1943, saying that their son and brother was missing at sea. He was confirmed dead three years later. Gilmor (sometimes spelled Gilmore) was a local hero in tiny Pelican Rapids, and his death was the subject of several newspaper articles, including one whose headline read: 'Pelican Boy, Lost At Sea.'



COVER STORIES

Of loss and longing

"I remember looking at him and him looking at me, and I had this strange feeling I wasn't going to see him again. But I thought maybe that's what everybody thinks."

— Ruth Grabarkewitz Anderson

LOSS from E1

Remembers the day Gil asked her to marry him

Gil's cousin Harley Kantrud was born just two weeks before Gil. Harley, now 84, remembers Gil as a fun-loving, occasionally mischievous friend. He was lean, with wavy, light brown hair. He had blue-gray eyes and a kind smile — and he was a hit with the girls. On summer weekends, Gil and Harley drove to nearby Detroit Lakes, where they attended lakeside dances.

After high school, Gil followed in his mother's footsteps, going to school at the St. Paul academy, and becoming a licensed beautician.

At 21, after a year of cutting women's hair — something he never liked much — Gil sold his car and bought Arline a new bike. Then he headed to Seattle, where he worked on planes with Boeing for about a year. When the war began, he knew he would eventually be called for the draft, so he returned home and enlisted in the Navy.

Before leaving, he gave away his possessions — his sailboat to one friend, his fishing pole and golf clubs to another — as though he knew he wouldn't be coming home.

Love never lost

May 1, 2003

Dear Troy,

I will be happy to speak to you about Gil. I think of him often. He was a very nice person and you would have been proud of him.

Gil was generous and thoughtful of me. I hope I can give you a glimpse of Gil. The best thing about him is that he loved me.

Sincerely, Ruth Anderson

Ruth Grabarkewitz Anderson, a minister's daughter from Elizabeth, Minn., just south of Pelican Rapids, took the train to New York City early in October 1943 to see Gil off. She had just moved to Washington, D.C., to live with her sister, and to be closer to Gil's ports. They were to marry when he returned.

For nearly 60 years, she talked to no one about Gil. She

is now 81 and has lost much of her sight.

I phoned her three weeks ago. Ruth still remembers the day Gil asked her to marry him. He was home on leave, and had sought permission from her father to propose at her bedside as she awoke one Sunday morning before church.

She is embarrassed to tell the story now, she says, because she doesn't want to give the wrong impression. "He went right back downstairs," she quickly noted.

But what was her answer? "Of course!"

She remembers the last time they spoke. They'd spent several days together in New York before he boarded the Murphy.

"I remember looking at him and him looking at me, and I had this strange feeling I wasn't going to see him again," she said. "But I thought maybe that's what everybody thinks."

She can still see his smile.

The ship left New York and was escorting a convoy under

radio silence one night when an oil tanker mistook the Murphy's sonar image for that of a torpedo. The tanker took evasive action and rammed the Murphy broadside, cutting it in two.

The bow sank within minutes, stranding more than 100 men in oil-slicked water; the stern stayed afloat. The crew was tallied: 35 missing, including Gilmor Weik.

His family received a telegram dated Nov. 3, 1943:

Mrs. Josephine Granrud Weik

The Navy Department deeply regrets to inform you that your son Gilmor E. Weik, Radarman second class U.S. Naval Reserve, is missing following a collision at Sea — in the performance of his duty — and in the service of his Country. The department extends its sincerest sympathy to you during your Great Anxiety. More definite information is not available, but will be forwarded to you immediately upon receipt.



Gilmor, pictured here fixing hair at the second booth, worked briefly in his mother Josie's Pelican Rapids beauty shop. After his death, the devastated Josie sold the shop and moved, eventually settling in Moorhead, Minn.

Letter Praises Pelican Boy, Lost At Sea

Mrs. Josie Weik of Pelican Rapids has received a letter from an officer who served on board the "Murphy" with her son, Petty Officer, Gilmer Weik, at the time it was cut in two while on duty in the Atlantic. Since the accident, which occurred on October 21, her son has been reported missing. A complete story of what happened and of the valor of the men aboard was published in the Journal Dec. 20.

The letter reads in part as follows:

"Dear Mrs. Weik: "You have probably received word from the Navy Department that your son is missing and perhaps Hanson (Ernest Hanson of Rothsay) has seen you. There is nothing much I can say except that I knew your son from serving on the Murphy with him since she was commissioned. So I know what a great person he was. He was intelligent, brave, determined and modest and he knew thoroughly."

"He was one of the outstanding men I have known."

Rear-Admiral Randall Jacobs, Chief of Naval Personnel

Josie sold her Pelican Rapids beauty shop and moved to Seattle for several years. There, she approached men in uniform on the street and asked if they knew of her son.

Gil was declared dead in 1946. Josie eventually returned to Moorhead, Minn., to open a new shop and live out her life. She died at age 91 in 1985.

Ruth remembers the mailman in Washington, D.C., returning a stack of unopened letters that she'd sent to Gil in the days following his leave. She cried so loudly that neighbors complained and her landlord asked her to be quiet.

Eventually, Ruth married a man from Fergus Falls and moved south of Oklahoma City, where they raised three sons.

She lost contact with Josie and Arline. She destroyed Gil's letters and gave her engagement ring to her brother, who gave it to his fiancée.

The only thing she kept was an ivory necklace that Gil bought her at the Rock of Gibraltar. She still wears it.

A ship recovered

Three weeks ago, I called Dan Crowell, a filmmaker and captain of a deep-sea vessel that searches for lost ships.

In October 2000, Crowell was diving about 80 miles off the New Jersey coast when he spotted wreckage covered in snagged fishnets 260 feet below the surface. He was fairly certain it was a Navy ship, but he had to end the dive before he could positively identify it.

Last September he returned. This time, he saw large guns pointing up from the deck, and his hunch was quickly confirmed: After almost 60 years, the bow of the U.S.S. Murphy had been found.

Crowell has since been in touch with survivors and is planning a documentary about finding the wreck, as well as a memorial service for survivors

and their families at the site.

I asked Ruth if she'd like to attend. She gently declined. She worried that she'd be intruding on our family. She didn't understand that but for the war, I would have known her all my life. My uncle's love connected us 25 years before I was born.

Two days ago, I spoke to my grandmother Arline. She and Ruth are planning a reunion, and she's been watching the History Channel every day. She told me of another lost soldier's nephew who has been searching for memories of his own.

She told me of a man who found letters his late father had written as a soldier in Europe, just months before he died.

"We're not the only ones who feel this way," she said.

I smiled.

Rest in peace, Gilmor Weik. You are not forgotten.

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RUDE from E1

Some call in sick simply to avoid rude treatment

Out of 1,100 professional and clerical workers surveyed, 71 percent said they had experienced putdowns or other rude behavior on the job; in some cases, the encounters led to anxiety and depression.

That same year, a report funded by the U.S. federal courts surveyed 1,100 of their employees and found that 71 percent had experienced putdowns, yelling, negative eye-contact or condescending and outright rude behavior on the job. Another survey found some people call in sick or take days off just to avoid dealing with someone who constantly upsets them with rude comments or actions.

If all that's not enough, we are still suffering the fallout from Sept. 11 and the war with Iraq, as people have become more fearful about an uncertain future.

Although concern for others and helpfulness increases during times of crisis, it can be short-lived and it never applies to all people, notes psychologist Joyce Brothers.

"We have a lot of negative emotions like anxiety, fear and worry," Brothers says. "We have very few positive emotions — joy, happiness, positive feelings toward each other, love. When we're unhappy or

anxious, the negative ones can come to the forefront."

"Everything that distracts people from what they're supposed to be doing contributes to this rudeness," says Terry Wall, a Gloucester Township, N.J.-based expert on workplace trends. "The closer you get to a deadline, the more that's piled up on your desk, you just start reacting to things. When you're distracted with something else, it [courtesy] goes out the window."

"It's [incivility] hard to qualify — it varies from place to place and person to person," adds Steve Farkas. He is senior vice president and director of research for Public Agenda, a New York-based nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization that found people wanted to talk about rudeness when asked to give their opinions on another topic. He says that whatever people perceive as rude, "There's a sense that it's gotten a lot worse."

Farkas explains that with funding from Pew Charitable Trusts, in the spring of 2001, Public Agenda set out to survey American views of moral and ethical behavior, but found people in focus groups were more concerned about courtesy violations.

"It's fascinating to me the

Tips for handling rude people

Try confronting the person.

You can say the behavior is disturbing you and ask that it not be repeated. However, be aware that confronting a rude person can escalate the situation. If you're lucky, the person will realize the offense and want to correct the behavior.

Ignore the person's actions.

But not doing anything could leave you frustrated and stressed over keeping your feelings to yourself.

Give 'em back the hell they give you.

This might make the problem worse, but when it works, it can make offenders think twice before they do it again.

Be especially polite to the rude person, hoping he or she will learn by example.

Don't resort to self-destructive behavior, such as drinking or smoking in excess.

You're the only one who will be hurt.

Don't try to change the person unless you are close to him or her. Rude behavior is that person's problem.

Some people are rude because of ignorance and can't be helped.

Notify management if rude customer service is a problem, so action can be taken.

Report aggressive drivers to police.

Teach children that cursing is wrong.

Sources: Nancy Friedman, St. Louis-based expert in customer service training and telephone etiquette; participants in a study on rudeness in America conducted by Public Agenda, a New York nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization; psychologist Joyce Brothers; California business etiquette expert and author Dana May Casperson.

extent to which people wrestle with this problem day in and day out — and they can take it home with them, fuming," Farkas says.

"People's lives are more hectic. Everyone is juggling and there's less familiarity with each other. When people cross paths, they are more strangers than they used to be."

Friedman believes that in many cases, "People don't do it on purpose. They really don't know they're being rude."

Friedman says that particularly in the field of customer service, teenage workers often are the object of complaints from customers. "Young kids are not getting the same training as other generations did. Either they are not being shown [proper business behavior] or they're not asked to keep the momentum up," she notes.

Dana May Casperson, the California-based author of "Power Etiquette: What You

Don't Know Can Kill Your Career," says you can blame people like Jerry Springer and his highly dysfunctional guests.

"Our culture is influenced by television, the movies and the media," Casperson says. "They have demonstrated rudeness and discourteousness, and to punch someone out if you don't agree with them — that's what people are seeing and it's a model for their behavior."

Pam Holland, co-author of the book "Help! Was That a Career Limiting Move?" and chief operating officer of a Pennsylvania-based business and communications skills company, is more optimistic. She says she sees more businesses taking an interest in the courteous handling of customers — even if it's just to keep their pocketbooks from taking a beating.

"We have had a resurgence in clients calling us for business etiquette training," Holland says. "People in dot-com businesses abandoned manners in a big way during the technology boom when there was little or no personal contact with customers. Now that the industry is bust, they are revisiting their behavior."

Others disagree. "The day-to-day [practice of rudeness] is continual and it's going to get worse," says Farkas.

Take the cell phone. "They weren't around 10 years ago. Now they're just another opportunity to experience rudeness," he says. Then there's call

waiting, voice mails that go unanswered, "flaming" e-mails and e-mails with incorrect grammar and spelling.

Brothers says technology, workplace stress, selfishness and a lack of time all contribute to the increase in rudeness. But the biggest culprit of all, Brothers believes, is the loss of community. Where you're detached from people, you feel more free to be inconsiderate. After all, the other person is just a stranger.

"There is almost no place that is a small town anymore," says Brothers. "When we're identifiable, we're nicer. Today, we're not as ashamed to be nasty."

ONLINE RESOURCES

INTERNET
Rudebusters.com: Offers a variety of ways to help reduce stress caused by dealing with rude people. It also includes self-tests for anger, rage, hostility and aggression, as well as etiquette quizzes and guides.
HumanityQuest.com (click on rudeness): Provides definitions of rudeness, as well as quotations about incivility, a chat room on the topic, related comics, cartoons, poetry, photographs and short stories.
Taxtherude.com: Resources on rudeness, etiquette, manners, politeness, anger control, and the health effects of anger and stress.

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