



Mark H. Gifford

December 21, 2020

Mark H. Gifford passed away peacefully at home with his family nearby in West Hartford on December 21, 2020. Mark was born September 23, 1930 in Boston, Massachusetts and was the beloved husband of Marjorie Kent Gifford for 68 years. He was the son of the late Mark and Henrietta Gifford of Belmont MA. Mark was a very kind, humorous, generous and intelligent man who was cherished by his family and inspired everyone around him during his well-lived life of 90 years.

Upon graduating in 1952 from the University of Rhode Island with a Bachelor of Science Degree and Teacher Education, Mark was proud to serve in the Navy as an officer during the Korean War on the USS Vogelgesang. He earned his Master's degree in Arts and Liberal Studies from Wesleyan University and attended Princeton University's National Science Foundation Summer Institute for his Master's plus 30 graduate hours and University of Hartford's Sixth year of graduate study.

Mark's legacy includes fostering knowledge, optimism and confidence within his students during his 40 year career teaching General Science and Advanced Placement Physics at the Norwich Free Academy in Norwich and Conard and Hall High Schools in West Hartford. Mark was the Science Department Head at Hall during the opening of the new Hall High School, Science Department Chair for West Hartford Public Schools, Principal of the West Hartford Summer School and President of the West Hartford Education Association. Mark dedicated himself to ensure the brightest possible future for

each of his students.

Mark was a member of Phi Delta Kappa, Fernleigh Lawn Bowling Club and the Old Guard and was a great sportsman enjoying tennis, golf, lawn bowling, cross-country skiing, traveling and bridge. He was an active volunteer for West Hartford Junior Tennis and inspired his children and many others to love the game.

Mark is survived by his beloved wife Marge; sister Nancy; sister-in-law, Barbara; daughter Cindy and her husband Bill; son Steve and his wife Suzanne; daughter Sandy and her partner Joe; grandchildren Alyssa, Laura and Ashley and great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Mark will be forever alive in the hearts of all those who loved him.

Burial was private with military honors at West Hartford's Fairview Cemetery. A memorial service will be held at a later date. Contributions in his memory can be made to the Alzheimer's Association of Connecticut, www.alz.org/ct. His family thanks the nurses and staff at Hartford Healthcare Hospice. Online expressions of sympathy may be made at www.molloyfuneralhome.com.

Tribute Wall

JK

“ Mr. Gifford taught our advanced placement physics classes at Conard High School. I recall his explanation of the inverse square distance rule. He held an imaginary rifle butter gun; it held a single pat of butter. He said that at one foot (or meter) it covered a single square piece of toast. At two feet (meters) the pat spread out covering four piece square. At three feet nine piece square.

It was his body language and enthusiasm that seared this explanation into my brain. I wanted to become a physicist as a result. My talents lay elsewhere. Several decades later I talk after school classes and modeled my instruction style like Mr. Gifford's engaging method.

Jerry krasnow - February 01, 2021 at 07:01 AM

KD

“ Hi Cindy, marge, Steve and Sandy , So Sorry for your loss, father and husband too, I remember Cindy talking lovingly about her father to me. I know your whole family. It was so nice to meet all of you as Cindy and i were growing up. Sorry for your grandchildren who will miss grandpa dearly too. It is such a hard time for the passing of loved ones. I would have loved to see all of you. Please take care and keep safe too. .

Kathy Sowa DeConti - January 08, 2021 at 02:10 PM

CS

“ Marge, Sandy and family, Very sorry to hear of Mark's passing. He was truly a wonderful man who touched many lives with his care in teaching future generations, and his friendships along the way. Many are better people for knowing Mark, including myself. Hugs to all. Chris (Stiles) Sesta

Chris Sesta - January 08, 2021 at 01:04 AM

MB

“ I had him as a teacher for Environmental Science at Conard. He was always funny and he wrote me a great letter of recommendation for college. Ssd that he is no longer with us.

Molly Holmes- Burgess - January 06, 2021 at 06:07 PM

CB

“ To the Gifford Family: I am so very sorry for your loss. Mr. Gifford was my Geometry teacher at Conard in the early 1960's. I can still visualize him as he was then, and hear his voice and his laugh. He made Geometry fun and meaningful, by dividing the class into teams that took turns writing steps toward solving a problem. I have thought of him often over the years— and used that approach often in my career and personal life: breaking down the solutions to problems into a series of sequential steps. Solutions in life were not always as straightforward as those in math, yet what I learned from Mr. Gifford is something I have carried with me for more than 50 years. He was a wonderful teacher and human being. I am saddened to learn of his passing, and happy that he loved such a long and rich life.

Carol E. Bower - January 04, 2021 at 11:31 AM

EF

“ My sincere condolences to the Gifford family. I had Mark as a teacher when I was a freshman at the Norwich Free Academy in 1956. I remember Mark as a wonderful person and teacher. Mark was one of the best teachers at NFA.

*Emil Fox
Glastonbury
Stonington*

Emil Fox - January 04, 2021 at 11:06 AM

RP

“ It was with sadness that I learned of Mark Gifford’s passing. Mark hired me as a substitute for Doc Dyber only a week after my college graduation. He came in to observe at least 4 times unannounced. Apparently I did well, because shortly thereafter I was offered a science teaching job at Hall for the following school year! He helped me greatly that first year. Mark had this very dry and very funny sense of humor that I remember vividly at our second science department meeting. There were 12 science teachers sitting in a circle, and Mark was leading a discussion on how to motivate students in science. How exciting as a new, idealistic and enthusiastic newbie to be a part of such professionalism!! Well, I happened to glance around the group, and noticed that it appeared that one of the teachers was starting to fall asleep! Soon the teacher started snoring, and without missing a beat, Mark dryly stated that “we seem to be having some difficulty motivating one of our teachers” and amid many chuckles, went right ahead with the discussion! Even more interesting, was that there was never another “siesta” again, realizing only years later that Mark had clearly addressed the issue in a tactful way! Mark was a great role model for me, especially in that regard. My deepest condolences to Mark’s entire family; he will be greatly missed.

Sincerely,

Rich Panek,

(Now retired) Teacher and Administrator

Richard Panek - January 04, 2021 at 08:35 AM

EC

“ *Mr. Gifford was my physics teacher at Conard in 1992. I've remembered and thought of him over the years as a man who treated me with respect - despite my being late to physics because I lost track of time in ceramics class I had just before physics. I remember he ran his troubles with his new snowblower by me, and somehow having an adult talk to me and ask advice about his snowblower really stuck with me all these years. You never know what impact you'll have upon a person. Rest easy Mr. Gifford. Hope the snowblower treated you well over the years. Liz (Krenicky) Culbert CHS class of '93*

Elizabeth Culbert - December 31, 2020 at 06:28 PM