



## Gilbert Jerome Baker

December 16, 1934 - October 26, 2024

Gilbert Jerome Baker, surrounded by his loving family, passed away on Saturday, October 26, 2024. Gil was born on December 16, 1934, in Baltimore, Maryland, to his loving parents, Abe and Sarah, along with his older sisters, Myra & Harriet. Born in the middle of the Great Depression, Gil was a source of great joy & pride to all those who loved him.

After graduating from Baltimore City College, he started working locally for Comfort Springs Mattress Company. Smart, quick-thinking, warm & hard-working, Gil quickly rose to the position of manager. In 1954, he relocated to help a struggling branch in Houston. While in Houston, Gil met Golda Geller. Their blind date to the much-missed Valian's restaurant, followed by a screening of "Fantasia", was a resounding success, and their loving partnership would last 62 wonderful, adventure-filled, loving years, until her death, in 2017. Together they would have three daughters; Karen, Ann, and Marcie.

In 1957, Gil was invited to join Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company by Abram Geller, a giant in the industry, who recognized Gil's desire to be of help to those he worked with. His strong work ethic, love of people and warm personality were recognized, and he attained great successes starting his first years in the business, despite being relatively new to Houston. He achieved Million Dollar Round Table status, then & now considered The Gold Standard

of success in his field. With history repeating itself, Pacific Mutual's home office recognized his skill sets, and asked him to manage the Houston Agency. Over the next 32 years, Gil would bring countless new agents into the business, training them, and helping them help others, while remaining in personal production. With Golda at his side as Business Manager, they built the agency into Pacific Mutual's top agency. Gil was a member of the Million Dollar Round Table for 53 years. 13 of those years he achieved Court of the Table, and one year, the very pinnacle of life insurance success, Top of the Table. These successes allowed him and Golda to travel to conventions all over the world, often allowing them to bring along their three girls. They remark on their childhood as being full of adventure and travels.

In 1969, Gil and his partner, Art Kraus started what was then one of the country's first Financial Services firms, Associates in Financial Planning, which later evolved to The AFP Group. 55 years later, that Houston firm is still going strong and in wonderful hands, carrying on a multi-generational legacy, with Ann in the family business to this day. .

Gil and Golda's commitments to the Houston Jewish Community and to Israel ran very deep, and their business successes brought joy in great measure due to what they could do to advance and strengthen them both. Gil was involved in Israel Bonds, AIPAC, served on the American Technion Society Houston Chapter Board, served as the Chair of the Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation, and he and Golda founded The Baker Woods through the Jewish National Fund near Kiryat Shemona, in Northern Israel. In 2007, they were honored by the Houston Chapter of Hadassah with The Myrtle Wreath Award, usually awarded only once or twice in a decade in most Hadassah communities. Gil and Golda made and led more than 40 trips to Israel, regularly taking community, local and state officials on guided trips to help them better understand, and be better able to support, Israel.

Gil was a master of telling jokes and stories. His delivery was spot on, and he always had wit up his sleeve. Even over the past hard three weeks while he was fading, he would still joke and make his family and wonderful, loving caregivers laugh out loud.

An organization that Gil cared for, deeply, was Kids' Meals, whose mission is to end childhood hunger. When Gil learned about them in the early 2000s, they were called Kid Care, and run by a couple working to feed the hungry pre-school kids and their families in their local neighborhood. As time went on and as the prior management dissolved, Gil stepped into a leadership role and put together a Board of Directors. For 2+ years, Gil and Golda funded the operating expenses of the reorganized Kids' Meals, out of their own pockets, until it was stable and could stand on its own. In gratitude, Kids' Meals Board of Directors created the Golda & Gil Baker Honoree Award, given annually at their Harvest Luncheon, attended by thousands of Houstonians. Since its inception in 2006, Kids' Meals has made and delivered more than 14 million free meals to food insecure children.

Gil's daughters, as well as their children, all attended, and loved, Camp Young Judaea, located in Wimberly, Texas. In the mid-80's, Gil and Golda served as Chairs of Hadassah's Southwest Zionist Youth Commission, which then ran CYJ. One off-season, lightning struck the two main gathering structures, burning them down. The camp was in some financial straits, and there was discussion among the board about whether it was best to just close down. But Gil and Golda insisted that Texas' Jewish families needed a camp here in Texas, and refused to take no for an answer. They personally guaranteed a loan for CYJ and enthusiastically fundraised, along with others, saving CYJ, and helping it move from nearly closing, to the many years of growth and success that have followed, to the delight of Jewish children and parents all over the state. The gathering place at CYJ, or Beit Am, is named in Gil and

Golda's honor.

Gil was preceded in death by his parents, Sarah & Abraham Baker, his sisters & brothers in law, Harriet & Leonard Estis, Myra & Richard Grossman, & Coleman “Punky” Lampe, sisters in law/brothers in law, Reba & Harry Swiff & Louis Rubin, as well as niece Sandra Rubin and nephews, David Lampe and Kevin Estis. He is survived by his sister in law, Devora Rubin, daughters & sons in law Karen Baker, Ann & David Ronn, Marcie Baker, and Peter Turrin, as well as his grandchildren Gabrielle, Netanya & Ahava Ronn, Avi Blum, Bryan Turrin and Lev Turrin, as well as his nieces, nephews, and many other loving friends and family.

The Houston Jewish community embraced Gil all those years ago when he arrived, and he was proud to be an active part of it. Gil lived an incredibly full life. He was a self-made man who never forgot where he came from. He had a giant zest for life, bottomless optimism, and a laugh as big as Texas. He was larger than life both figuratively and literally. His generous, warm and helpful spirit inspired, taught and guided so many people, in countless ways.

A funeral service will be held on Tuesday, October 29, 2024, at 10:00 AM at Congregation Brith Shalom, 4610 Bellaire Blvd., Bellaire, Texas 77401. A graveside service will immediately follow the funeral service at Beth Jacob Cemetery, 2300 Almeda Genoa Rd., Houston, Texas 77047.

A live stream of the service is available to be viewed at the following link: [https://www.youtube.com/live/euOr9WLkK5Y?si=L0A0jLSWHeW\\_f2hw](https://www.youtube.com/live/euOr9WLkK5Y?si=L0A0jLSWHeW_f2hw)

Memorial contributions may be made to Kid’s Meals (<https://kidsmealsinc.org/give/>), Camp Young Judaea (<https://cyjttexas.org/donate>), or Congregation Brith Shalom (<https://www.brithshalom.org/payment.php>).



# Cemetery Details

## Beth Jacob Cemetery

2300 Almeda Genoa Rd  
Houston, TX 77047

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

OCT **29**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Congregation Brith Shalom  
4610 Bellaire Blvd.  
Bellaire, TX 77401

# Tribute Wall

KL

“ Karen, Ann and Marcie,  
I just returned from an extensive trip overseas and was so  
saddened to learn of your Dad's passing. May his memory be a  
blessing to you and your families.  
Karen Lampe

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**Karen Lampe** - November 01, 2024 at 04:17 PM

CG

“ My husband and I were fortunate enough to meet Gil in the early  
2000s when we were just starting out. He and his amazing daughter  
Ann helped us plan and prepare for our future and our expanding  
family. Even more fortunate for us is that we became friends and  
learned about all the amazing things Gil and Golda had done for the  
Houston community. This is a hard loss for so many. All our love, the  
Gaithers. x

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**Carolyn Gaither** - October 31, 2024 at 07:19 AM

DH

“ Karen, Ann & Marcie-Your dad taught me so many life and career  
lessons for which I am extremely grateful. He was also a great role  
model for generous giving to the community and exemplified the  
rewards achieved through hard work. Blessings to you and your  
family. David Hanson

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**David Hanson** - October 29, 2024 at 10:22 PM

CC

“ *What a loss to every one of us who have had the privilege of Gil's presence in our lives! His intelligence, wit, warmth and caring heart were such a huge part of everything he did. He was a trusted advisor, a supportive confidante and over 30 years really felt like a part of the Crosby family. I am certain that many others feel the same way. Gil was truly a gift to us all. We will remember him with love.*

*Carol Crosby  
Colleyville, Tx*

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**Carol Crosby** - October 28, 2024 at 06:09 PM