

Merl Gillett



Merl Francis Gillett, 84, of Altoona, Wis., passed away Saturday, May 1, 2010, at Oakwood Villa Nursing Home in Altoona.

Merl was born January 31, 1926, west of Weyerhaeuser, Wis., on what is now called Cranberry Road. He was the son of Vernon Claire and Gracie Ione (Alvord) Gillett. He graduated in May of 1944 from Weyerhaeuser High School, and entered the U.S. Army in June of 1944. He was honorably discharged in May of 1946 at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. He served in the southern Philippines, Luzon and Japan, and was awarded the Bronze Star.

Merl married Charlotte Elaine Bartels on April 22, 1950, at Weyerhaeuser Methodist Church, with the Rev. Harold Allison officiating. He attended Mollar Barber College in Minneapolis in the fall of 1949 until the spring of 1950. His first job was at Elberts Barbershop in Eau Claire, Wis. He then owned and operated a barber shop in Altoona, which he sold in 1973. That same year, he started the fire service program at Chippewa Valley Technical College as a fire service teacher coordinator. He retired June 10, 1988. He was fire chief in Altoona from 1966 to 1968, and was runner-up for the Schlitz Fire Fighter Award in 1977.

Merl was a member of the Township Fire Department since it was organized in 1954-1955.

Fire fighting and teaching were an important part of his life. He was active in many state and national fire department organizations. He taught first aid to Boy Scouts, and was a volunteer fire fighter. From 1957 to 1963, he was assistant fire chief of the Township Fire Department. He was presented with a plaque in 1978 in recognition of his outstanding service of 14 1/2 years as an officer of the Township Fire Department. He was president of the Wisconsin State Fire Service Instructors from 1982 to 1984, and was a member of National Fire Protection Association and International Society of Fire Service Instructors. He also was president of Altoona Businessmen.

Merl is survived by his children, Gloria (Bill) Schoenknecht of Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., Ron (Joette) Gillett of Buffalo City, Wis., and Lisa (Duane) Beck of Ladysmith, Wis.; grandchildren, Cathy (Brian) Muraski of Wisconsin Rapids, Jessie (Brandyn) Polak of Conrath, Wis., Mandy Izdepski of Ladysmith, Joseph (friend, Amanda) Gillett of St. Charles, Minn., Shawn Gillett of Laramie, Wyo., Kristen Beck and Daniel Beck, both of Ladysmith, Stephanie (Patrick) Murphy of Louisiana and Kevin (Cari) Landwer of Mankato, Minn.; great-grandchildren, Samantha and Caitlyn Mertz, Dillon, Makenzie and Andrew Jeffrey Muraski of Wisconsin Rapids, Hannah and Mikayla Izdepski of Ladysmith, Alyssa and Brady Polak of Conrath, Noah Lanter of Kentucky, Grace Mary Murphy of Louisiana, Katelyn and Madelyn Landwer of Minnesota; and three sisters-in-law.

He was preceded in death by his wife; four brothers, Wesley, Vernon, Reno and Les; one sister, Doris, grandson, Jeffrey Schoenknecht; nieces, Tina and Barb; and nephew, Jerry.

The funeral service for Merl Gillett will be at 11 a.m. Friday, May 7, 2010, at Lake Street United Methodist Church in Eau Claire, with Pastor Graham West officiating. Burial and military rites will be in Rest Haven Cemetery, town of Washington, Eau Claire County, Wis.

Friends may call from 4 to 7 p.m. Thursday, May 6, at Stokes, Prock and Mundt Funeral Chapel, 535 S. Hillcrest Parkway, Altoona, and one hour prior to the service at the church.

Online condolences may be offered at www.cremationsociety-wi.com.

Stokes, Prock & Mundt Funeral Chapel, Altoona, is serving the family.