



## James Gilley

April 7, 2021

James R. Gilley passed away in Ft. Collins, CO on April 7, 2021, surrounded by his wife and daughters. James R. Gilley was born to Luther and Veatura Gilley, on March 19, 1944, in Pueblo, Colorado. He graduated from Fowler High School and received his BS and MS degrees in Agricultural Engineering from Colorado State University. He continued his education at the University of Minnesota where he received his PH.D, also in Agricultural Engineering. Jim joined the faculty at the University of Nebraska as an assistant professor in 1974, where he taught for 14 years and was promoted to associate professor and to full professor. Following his tenure at Nebraska he served as Department Head of the Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering Department at Iowa State University. In 1993, he accepted the position as Department Head at Texas A&M University, remaining there until his retirement in 2014. Following his retirement, he and his high school sweetheart and wife, Karen, moved to Windsor, CO.

Jim was active in his professional society, American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE), for many years and was a lifetime member. In 1993, he received the Grade of Fellow. Jim's career was devoted to academic advancement and the education of students. Jim received the 1999 Massey-Ferguson Educational Gold Medal Award to honor his dedication to the spirit of learning and teaching in the field of agricultural engineering. Jim proudly mentored numerous engineers and scientists during

his distinguished career and he made significant contributions to the engineering profession. In 2011, Jim and his wife established the ASABE James R. and Karen A. Gilley Academic Leadership Award to honor outstanding academic leadership for current and future generations.

Jim was known internationally as an irrigation engineering expert and traveled around the world, collaborating with others to improve irrigation efficiency and delivery. From Africa, Asia, and Oceania to Europe and his favorite country, Belgium, he loved meeting engineers and scientists from different countries and maintained these friendships across the globe for more than 45 years.

The Nebraska Cornhuskers were always near and dear to his heart and he never missed watching a game even after moving away from the Cornhusker State. He loved to golf, and gardening was his favorite pastime (especially designing the drip irrigation systems). Jim always loved being with family - his grandchildren were especially dear to him.

Jim is survived by his wife of 55 years, Karen, daughter Alison Kentch (Sean) of Weatherford, Texas and daughter, Alicia Gilley of Aurora, Colorado. Surviving grandchildren are Chelsey Gilley-Dunn of Ft. Collins, Colorado, Madison Kentch of Lawrence, Kansas and Logan Kentch of Lawrence, Kansas. Also surviving is sister-in-law, Jane Stubbs of Stuart, Florida and many amazing nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, Luther and Veatura Gilley, his three brothers, Robert, Edward and Donald, and his brother-in-law, Gary Stubbs.

Memorials may be made to the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers Foundation (2950 Niles Road, St. Joseph, MI 49085-9659) or the Alzheimer's Association (PO Box 96011 Washington, DC 20090-6011, <https://www.alz.org/get-involved-now/donate>).

Memorial arrangements are pending.

“It’s never goodbye, it’s see you later”

# Tribute Wall

BE

“ I live in Houston and have since graduating from Texas A&M with a degree in Agricultural Systems Management. When buying my 1st, 2nd, and now looking at my 3rd home, I remember clearly Dr. Gilley recommending to always look at the county flood plain maps before putting in an offer. Going through that again now, and thought of him. Sad to hear he's passed, but good memories from his class, and certainly practical advice given!

Ben - February 22 at 12:14 AM



“ James Gilley

October 25, 2022 at 06:14 PM

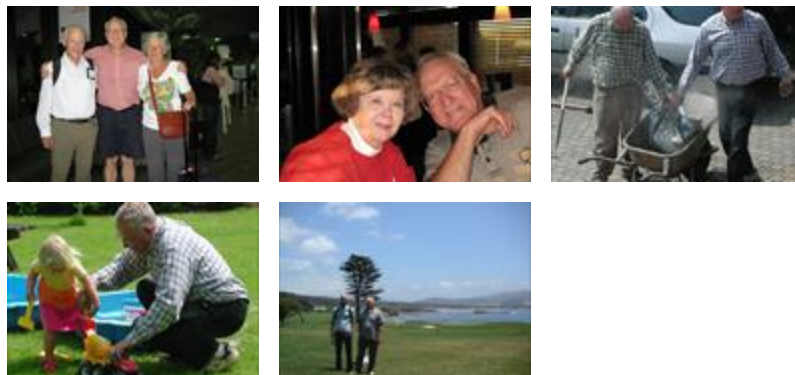
JN

“ Karen, my condolences to you and your family. You are all in my prayers. I miss our fantastic dinners and conversations.

Joe Nolte - May 05, 2021 at 08:41 PM

FJ

“ 14 files added to the album Memories Album



Feyen Jan - May 02, 2021 at 04:06 AM

JH

“ Jim hired me here at Iowa State. We didn't overlap much but I always respected him. He was always full of encouragement to those of us still developing in a our careers. My thoughts and prayers are with Karen and the family.

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**Jay Harmon** - April 28, 2021 at 02:10 PM

GN

“ James was a fellow department head in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M. As the picture shows, he always had a smile on his face. Never bashful about expressing his opinion, he was an influential leader. He thrived on being a Nebraska fan in Aggieland. My condolences to his family,  
Gene Nelson  
Bryan, Texas

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**Gene Nelson** - April 25, 2021 at 12:26 PM

JE

“ I want to express my sincere condolences to Gilley’s family (Karen, Allison, and Alicia). I will miss Dr. Jim Gilley because he was more than a mentor for me. He was a close friend and a person that I always admired. Dr. Gilley was my first advisor of my doctorate program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I was also lucky to have him as a teacher. All my classmates and I enjoyed and had fun in his class. He was a character.

I had the opportunity to have several gatherings and dinners with his family. I enjoyed watching the Corn Huskers football games, popping fireworks on the Fourth of July, and had Thanksgiving dinners with the Gilley family. Dr. Gilley later moved to be the department head of Iowa State University. Later, I was lucky to have him as my boss at Texas A&M University. Dr. Gilley visited me at Fort Stockton and later in Weslaco, TX to supervise demonstrations and irrigation experiments. Dr. Gilley always provided me guidance on my educational programs. He enjoyed being around farmers. It was exciting and fun to be around him. Dr. Gilley was a very bright and deep thinker. When he asked me a question, he left me thinking for several days. In a way, he wanted me to reflect on specific problems. Dr. Gilley is recognized as one of the most talented scientists in Irrigation Engineering. I also had the opportunity to create a stronger bond and connection with him on my long trips in West Texas. I always remember him being young in spirit. I remember his red Mercedes Benz that he imported from Germany. In my long drives in West Texas, he used to tell me that he always enjoyed long drives like the ones he used to take with Karen to Colorado. I will miss his smile, his cheerful personality. Dr. Jim Gilley, I will always miss you and remember you. Rest in peace.

Juan Enciso

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Juan Enciso - April 22, 2021 at 09:39 AM

JS

*I am saddened to learn of the passing of my good friend Jim Gilley, whom I admired when he was Department Head at Texas A&M University, whilst I reported to Jim as Assoc. DH /Extension. He strongly encouraged me to apply for and accept the Resident Director position at Amarillo and we joined in mentoring & evaluations of BAEN faculty at that Center. Jim was considered to have a strong personality and opinions yet he respected people offering differing points of view. Lively conversations always. I was extremely touched by his phone call congratulating me on contributions and our association when I retired in 2017. Think of Dr. Gilley often.*

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**John M. Sweeten** - April 25, 2021 at 11:13 PM

GS

*“ Beth and I send our condolences to Karen and family. I had the pleasure of taking both Jim's undergrad and grad irrigation classes at Nebraska. Jim's teaching style and the subject matter content just seemed to work well together for student's to get a lot out of any course you took from him. He was later my Department Head when he moved to Texas A&M so I knew him as my career developed from undergrad to grad student and then colleague. I learned a lot from him over my career and also had so many enjoyable conversations over the years about the Huskers, our profession, families and people we had met and learned from. Several of us at A&M that knew him all poured two fingers of scotch the evening we heard of his passing in honor of Jim and his memories.*

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**Greg Stark** - April 21, 2021 at 01:28 PM

JG

*“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album*



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**John Gilley** - April 21, 2021 at 12:02 PM

JG

“ I have attached in the photo section a picture taken in 1952 that shows Jim Gilley (at age 8) with his parents Luther and Vetura Gilley (John Gilley, Jim's nephew, at age 2 is in the wagon). It is obvious from the picture that this farm family is well nourished (especially the baby,) healthy, and happy. Jim's parents formal education ended at the 8th grade. A one room school was the norm in rural America at the turn of the 20th century. Homesteaders could not afford to send their children to boarding schools for further education. It is a tribute to our public education system that Jim Gilley received a Ph.D. in engineering and spent his professional career educating other engineers at prestigious land grant universities. He helped fulfill the dreams of other parents for successful, profitable, and impactful careers for their children through public education.

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**John Gilley** - April 21, 2021 at 11:26 AM

JG

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



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**John Gilley** - April 21, 2021 at 11:20 AM

JG

“ April 10, 2021  
Karen,

*I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to you, Alison, and Alicia. Jim was six years older than me, and growing on the same farmstead I always looked up to him. He frequently constructed things as a child and his selection of engineering as a profession was obvious. Jim always had lots of friends and he loved organizing athletic activities for the children during large family gatherings. As you are keenly aware, Jim was very competitive and even though he was only 6 feet tall, he served as a center on the Fowler High School basketball team. I know you and Jim were high school sweethearts but waited until Jim graduated from Colorado State University to get married.*

*I was honored when Jim asked me to serve as an usher during your wedding. I was overjoyed that Jim was marrying into such a loving, carrying family. As you know, I adored your family, and I thought your mother was one of the most wonderful caring women I had ever met. (Everyone else she knew felt the same way!).*

*As you are aware, Jim had a major impact on my personal and professional life. When I graduated from Southern Colorado State College, Jim invited me to come to St Paul and visit with other professors in the Agricultural Engineering Department. I left Minnesota knowing it was the place for me. I have always been grateful for the way you opened up your home and life in St Paul for me.*

*I graduated from the University of Minnesota and then worked for two years in Bismarck for North Dakota State University. When I decided to continue my education, Jim recommended I attend Colorado State University and he put me in contact with USDA-ARS staff there. After I graduated, Jim convinced me to apply for a job at Nebraska where I have spent my professional career. Being able to spend time with you, Jim and your growing family was an important*

*consideration when deciding to come to Lincoln. You will recall that we traveled together during that period on several occasions to attend holidays and special occasions in Colorado.*

*Jim was a wonderful mentor to me and many others in the engineering profession and has made significant contributions to engineering science. However, when visiting with Jim, he was most proud of you, Alison, Alicia, and his grandchildren.*

*Karen, thank you so much for always loving Jim and helping to keep him grounded. You and Jim have had a wonderful life, raised two charming daughters and you have a devoted family. We will all miss Jim greatly, but can take comfort in his accomplishments and our wonderful memories.*

*Again, I extend my heartfelt sympathy,*

*John E. Gilley*

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**John Gilley** - April 21, 2021 at 10:05 AM



“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



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**Alicia Gilley** - April 20, 2021 at 08:34 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



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Alicia Gilley - April 20, 2021 at 08:34 PM

TH

“ Jim was a dear friend & colleague for my entire post PhD career. He got the job at the Univ. of Nebraska that I'd applied for, too. We enjoyed many rounds of golf with others at ASAE (now ASABE) meetings finding enough time to sneak off from professional meetings. He had an infectious sense of humor! He always greeted you with a big Gilley smile! My wife & I enjoyed our time's with Jim & Karen, too. He worked hard and played the same way. We met as graduate students at an ASAE meeting when we were both about completing our PhD degrees at about the same time. We maintained our friendship from those early days as young professors to a year or so ago when Alzheimer's hit him. But I will always cherish my memories and enjoy thinking about our fun to times together. He was a visionary and a devoted leader with a distinguished research, academic career. He was always so proud of his family. I'm sad that he didn't live long enough in Windsor, CO to fully enjoy his deserved retirement. I'm better because Jim Gilley not only challenged me but encouraged me.

Condolences to the Gilley family.

Terry Howell, Sr.

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Terry Howell - April 20, 2021 at 08:04 PM

CO

“ *I am still at a loss for the death of my dear dear friend Jim! He and I go back over 55 years starting at the University of Minnesota. We really became close from the early 90s in College Station Texas. He was a great leader, a strong engineer, and simply a wonderful person. He will be missed by his family and his numerous friends. God bless his memory!*

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**Chuck Onstad** - April 20, 2021 at 07:58 PM