

**Charles W. Gibson, OLS (Ret.) # 628  
1916 – 2011**



Charles Wilbert Gibson, a long-time resident of Bracebridge, slipped peacefully from this world on September 23, 2011 at age 95 surrounded by his immediate family. Although his last few years were lived in total darkness after losing his eyesight, he always maintained an interest in world events, the environment, a curiosity about life and history and was a caring influence on his family.

Chuck (as he was generally known) was the second youngest of four children (Eldon, Alda, Charles and Mary) born to Wilbert Silas and Mary Isabella Gibson in 1916. He was the great-grandson of David Gibson, an Ontario Land Surveyor and a key participant in the Rebellion of 1837 who fled for his life and spent ten years in exile in the United States. He was subsequently pardoned by Queen Victoria and returned to Canada becoming the Provincial Surveyor of Western Upper Canada.

Chuck's long life began in a now vanished, much less diverse Toronto amid the carnage of WWI, when horse-drawn carriages were just giving way to automobiles and electric trams. He came of age in a world shaped by the Depression, graduating from North Toronto Collegiate where he was a notable athlete. He subsequently trained as a land surveyor, joining the family's firm of WS Gibson & Sons which evolved into Speight, Van Nostrand & Gibson Ltd. following his retirement.

Shortly after the outbreak of WWII in Europe in 1939, Chuck met his future wife, Margaret Bailey, who had left her birthplace of Bracebridge to work in Toronto. Their marriage, celebrated the day before the attack on Pearl Harbour, was to flourish and endure for nearly 70 years. Not long after his marriage, Chuck enlisted as a Lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Artillery and served overseas in the U.K. for three years while Marg returned to her family in Bracebridge to raise their first child, Marilyn. His expected participation in the D-Day invasion was prevented by an injury suffered in a motorcycle accident.

After his return to Toronto at the end of the war, he resumed working in the family surveying business, laying out subdivisions and lots as Toronto enjoyed a rapid post-war suburban expansion. Many of the original subdivision plans and lot titles are based on surveys carried out by his firm. Three more children were born, two daughters, Beverly and Rosemary, and a son David.

In 1950 he moved his growing family to a new home he had built in Willowdale, purchasing a prime ravine lot he had recently laid out and surveyed on a subdivided farm, not far from his ancestor's original residence (the present Gibson House Museum). The couple was active in building the Bayview and York Mills community, including helping to start the first local church in which he served as an Elder for many years.

After retiring in 1976, Chuck and Margaret subsequently moved to Bracebridge where they joined the Happy Gang and made many wonderful new friends, enjoying the slower-paced small-town life as well as cottaging with their extended family in the summer. They also enjoyed many trips to visit Chuck's brother Eldon (also an Ontario Land Surveyor) and his wife Dorothy, who had retired to Mexico, as well as travels to the UK to revisit wartime experiences and Scottish roots centered on David Gibson's ancestral village of Glamis in Forfarshire. Following Chuck's demise, Margaret has continued to live in Bracebridge, where she has various family connections.

In later years Chuck was delighted to be the grandfather of eight and great-grandfather of ten, all of whom will miss his presence and his stories of bygone eras. For many decades he presided over his growing clan at the cherished family cottage "Wit's End" on Lake Rosseau, where (like the patriarch in "On Golden Pond") he imparted his advice, criticism and views to all assembled. He encouraged participation in the pleasures of Muskoka (especially the silent sports of sailing, canoeing, rowing and swimming), together with a concern for preserving the natural environment.

Chuck, as befitting a land surveyor, ever attentive to accuracy and detail, led an exemplary life centered on diligent endeavour, order, family and an abiding curiosity. He lived to witness space travel and satellite-based surveying, the rise of the global village (which led to family with connections to various countries), and the advent of the mysterious internet. At the time of his death, he was the oldest living member of the Ontario Land Surveyors Association (OLS 628 retired).

Chuck is fondly remembered by his family, friends and acquaintances for his gruff affection, sharp wit, reflexive thriftiness, generous gifts to family and many charitable organizations, extensive knowledge of local history and geography, grudging acceptance of the unsettling mores of the modern era, a love of Big Band Music and a deep attachment to CBC radio.

Following cremation, friends and relatives gathered at the family home in Bracebridge on September 24th to mourn his passing and celebrate his life, recalling shared events and favourite stories. In accordance with his wishes, a memorial celebration will be held in the summer on July 7th at his beloved family cottage. Donations may be made in his name to the South Muskoka Hospital in Bracebridge.