

John Sidney Geil
October 3, 1924 – January 25, 2022

Memorial Service and Celebration of Life
March 26, 2022
Ashlar Village, Wallingford, CT

Thank you all for coming to honor and celebrate the life of John Sidney Geil, David's and my much-loved father.

My father's family is represented here today by his brother and sister-in-law, Leon and Sharon Geil (the other one!) from New Hampshire, two of his nephews and their families: Mark and Heidi from New Hampshire and Todd, Deb, Alex, and Hannah from Rhode Island. Jeff and Paula, also from New Hampshire, were unable to be here today because they are visiting Paula's family in Florida.

My brother, David, lives in Washington state and has also, unfortunately, been unable to attend. So I speak for both of us today. We have often observed to each other that, when our 'souls' chose parents, we chose the best parents anyone could imagine. We had a profoundly happy family life, in large part because our parents truly wanted and cherished their children and placed their family life as their highest priority.

Our father was successful in his career, ultimately becoming the Chief Industrial Hygienist for the State of Connecticut, but he turned down many opportunities for professional advancement that would have required him to be less present in our family life. We lived comfortably enough - and with parental role models who taught us to value what we believe really matters.

We appreciate the many cards, calls and other testaments we have received, acknowledging the well-lived life of our father, John - also known to the family as Sid. The same words have appeared time and again, recognizing our father and the values he lived by:

“a gentleman”,
“ a sweet, gentle man”,
“a kind man”,
“a life of contribution full of friendship”,
“always greeted me with a smile”,
“will always be remembered for charity and nobility”.

We will miss him, as we miss our dear mother, Janet Ellen Harris Geil who passed away nearly 9 years ago. There is a life story that one rarely hears anymore: when my mother passed away in April, 2013 they had celebrated 68 years of marriage and had been in each other's lives for more than 85 years.

Our father was born two days before our mother and they were born only a quarter of a mile apart. At that time, our father was an only child, our mother the youngest of 6. Their mothers knew each other and GramGram, our father's mother, often spoke fondly of having “helped Mrs. Harris up at the ‘big house’”.

Grandmother Harris, our mother's mother, had 6 children and a niece who lived with them. Our Grandfather was a dairy farmer with a large farm and herd. So, in addition to feeding her large family, Grandmother Harris tended to 4 farmhands, kitchen gardens, assorted livestock, and a very large farmhouse - all before most modern appliances and during The Great Depression. I am sure they each valued their near neighbor's help and support.

My parents started First Grade together. My mother was very shy and, on day 1, stumbled over giving her name to the teacher – and it was my father who told the teacher who she was. They were classmates right through to High School. My father was on the basketball team and my mother was a cheerleader. Each cheerleader had a team member for which she cheered by name. Yes, you guessed it, my mother cheered for Sid Geil. They dated, but dated other people as well. They both planned to go on to college – Daddy to University of Rochester, Mommy to what was then Buffalo State Teacher's College.

World War II intervened and, instead of attending UofR, Daddy enlisted for pilot training in the Army Air Corps – as it was before it officially became the Air Force. Initially training as a pilot on B-17s, he was selected to continue pilot training on the new B-29 “heavy bomber” and graduated – pilot's wings and officer commission – on June 27, 1944. My parents had become officially engaged on September 9th and both were home for Christmas, 1944 with all their families present. Because of the uncertainties of the war, they decided to 'be sensible' and delay getting married.

By February, Daddy was based in Pratt, Kansas, was soon due to be sent to the Pacific arena, and was ultimately persuaded by his friends that he and my mother should be married before he left. My father was persuaded, my mother agreed. She took a leave of absence from Buffalo college and travelled by train to Pratt. They were married on March 1, 1945 in the Army chapel on the base – just 20 years old, with no family present - only Daddy's crew and their wives!

On August 6, 1945 my father began his duties as part of the new 8th Air Force, 316th Bomb Wing, 346th Bomb Group, 462nd Squadron bound ultimately for Okinawa. On August 13, 1945 he and his crew were on Tinian in pre-flight briefing, preparing for their first mission to drop incendiary bombs on Tokyo. Just before the end of the briefing the group commander, a Col. Hassemer, entered the room and calmly announced that Japan had surrendered and the mission was cancelled. My father was proud of his Air Force service but, essentially a kind and gentle man, he was immensely relieved that he never had to fly a bombing raid in earnest.

My father remained in the Pacific region for another year, providing air support to various clean-up campaigns. His and another crew were based in Hawaii and in June, 1946 were able to arrange for their wives to join them. An unexpected Hawaiian Honeymoon!

I do wish to share with you one more important story about my father.
I hope you will find it as comforting as I do.

As recently as this last Christmas, my father – at 97! - was managing to live independently. I know what that effort cost him and we discussed it over the two days I spent with him at Christmas. He was so tired and missed being with my mother. Soon after his strength weakened and he was being cared for, “down the hill”, at the Masonic Health Center.

Saturday, January 12th

I was planning to visit him in the afternoon. I have recently reconnected with several of my college friends and that morning my former roommate texted me to offer any help. I texted back asking that she keep us in her prayers, then I allowed myself to weep a bit and appealed to my mother – I talk to my mother often and I am NOT crazy! I told her that Daddy was ready to join her but he could not quit, never having avoided responsibility or given up in his life. She needed to come and help him because he simply did not know how to stop.

Later, when I went to visit Daddy, one of the nurses stopped me in the hall. She had gone in before lunch to check on him, he had startled awake, looked around a little confused, and announced, “I

shouldn't be here." She said, "What do you mean, John?" - to which he replied, "I should not be here. I died at 10:44 this morning. Someone called my name."

I went in and, when I asked him about this, he repeated exactly the same thing. I asked if there was any significance to 10:44 and he said "No. Except that's when I died." He was completely clear, lucid, and specific. We visited for a while and, out of curiosity, I checked my phone to see what time I had texted my roommate that morning: 10:42!

10:44 is exactly when I was appealing to my mother to come and get him!

I also saw that my roommate had also done a little research and since sent another text. She had identified '10-44' as something called an 'Angel Number' signifying:

"...a release and freedom. 1044 spiritually means that you can set yourself free from restrictions and move toward your dreams."

And there was an additional 'coincidence' - I think not! The time of "10:42" when I replied to her text: "This particular code is used to indicate an officer's end of tour. While 10-42 is most frequently used when an officer has completed his tour of service for the day, it is also used in conjunction with funeral proceedings when an officer has died in the line of duty."

My dad and I talked all this over and we thought it was, at least, interesting. Daddy's memory of it was so compelling that we shared it over the next few days with friends, family, and the staff on Sturges3. I was convinced that my mother had come for him, in answer to my appeal and tears, but that he had sensed my distress and held back from leaving. Over the next days I spent some time reassuring him and we spoke with my brother several times on the phone, who also reassured him that he and I were going to be fine.


Fast forward to Tuesday, January 25th.

Hospice called me very early in the morning and suggested that I make my visit "sooner rather than later" that day. Hospice had begun administering morphine during the night because Daddy's breathing had become very labored. I was with my father by 8:45am. He squeezed my hand so I know he was aware that I was by his side. He was peaceful and not in any pain. I spent some talking to him, again reassuring him that David and I were fine, that he had done his job well as our parent, and told him that when Mommy came this time he could go with her.

The Nurse Supervisor came in to check we were doing alright. I was seated by his bed, holding my father's hand and she was standing on the opposite side of his bed. I suddenly sensed Daddy was not breathing, Kistal moved to check for a pulse. Daddy took one big breath in, let out one huge breath, and he was gone. Kistal asked me to check my phone for the time: **10:44am.**

It was official: Daddy was right. He died at 10:44am. Kistal and I just stared at each other.

Whatever you may choose to believe, I am deeply comforted by these circumstances. I believe my mother came for Daddy a second time and this time he allowed himself to be reunited with her, having lived a long, productive, and loving life.



*Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there, I do not sleep.*

*I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the softly falling snow.
I am the gentle showers of rain,
I am the fields of ripening grain.*

*I am in the morning hush,
I am in the graceful rush
Of beautiful birds in circling flight.
I am in the starshine of the night.*

*I am in the flowers that bloom,
I am in a quiet room.
I am in the birds that sing,
I am in each lovely thing.*

*Do not stand at my grave and cry.
I am not there, I do not die.*



Mary E. Faye, 1932