

Kenneth Stewart "Stew" Gibson, age 85, died peacefully at Cottage Hospital in Woodsville, N.H., on Oct. 1, 2013. Stew lived most of his adult life in Waterbury, Vt., from 1960 until December 2012. There he raised his family, milked cows, and gave of himself through friendship, community service, Christian fellowship, and in the Cooperative Extension Service as County Agent and State Extension Dairyman.



(no description)

Born in St. Johnsbury, Vt. on Aug. 8, 1928, he was the son of Charles E. Sr. and Elizabeth (Garvin) Gibson. Stew's fondest memories of youth were of working for his Uncle John on the farm at "Gibson Acres" in South Ryegate, his home town. This is where the great love for farming and cows blossomed in Stew, as he learned the art of working the dump rake as a teamster, milked cows by hand, stacked loose hay, and took mid-day siestas under the old sugar maple.

Stew attended St. Johnsbury Academy, graduating in the Class of '46. Sports, academics, leadership activities, and dear friendships were hallmarks of Stew's high school days. He lettered in football, basketball, and track, was class president, and consistently achieved academic honors.

Stew graduated from the University of Vermont College of Agriculture in 1951 with a B.S. in Agronomy. In 1953 he received his M.S. in Dairy Cattle Nutrition from the University of New Hampshire.

After their simultaneous graduation from UNH in 1953 Stewart and Marion Webster joined in matrimony. Stew enrolled in the U.S. Army as an officer trainee, and the newlyweds were stationed at a base near Baltimore, Md. It was there that their first daughter, Mary, was born in 1954.

In 1956, Stew began his career with the UVM Extension Service as the Assistance County Agricultural Agent in Chittenden County, Vt. A son David was born in 1958. In 1960, the couple purchased a 30-cow dairy herd and farm on Kneeland Flats, in Waterbury, Vt., and Stew left the Extension Service - temporarily. The second son, William, was born in 1963. Lucia's birth in 1968 rounded out the clan.

Stew and Marion farmed from 1960 to 1968. In 1963, Stew 're-upped' with VT Extension as the Washington County Agricultural Agent. In 1967, Stew's became State Extension Dairyman, which included teaching courses in the UVM Ag College. With anguish, he and Marion sold the farm and moved the family to Gregg Hill in Waterbury Center, Vt.

In this state-wide role, Stew hoed a unique row in his profession, compassionately meeting each individual "where they were", helping to sort out issues and priorities, then providing guidance, instruction, and mentorship from a custom-fit blend of research, personal experience, and common sense. Stew had a gift for communicating with deep sincerity, profound understanding, and endearing humor.

Stew's influence gained a larger than Vermont and New England reputation from his practical synthesis of information delivered to farmers in various leadership roles: Superintendent of Cattle (1964; 1969-1981) and Director (1958-1981) for the Champlain Valley Exposition; award-winning management of the UVM Dairy Herd; dairy fitting and showing, judging, and teaching thereof; instruction, guidance and selection of VT youth for 4-H dairy

showmanship; leadership activities with Cabot Creamery Coop, VT Dairyman's & Industry Association, VT Dairy Herd Improvement Association, UVM Extension Faculty Organization, and the VT Housing & Conservation Board; and teaching, advising and befriending countless students at UVM for nearly 30 years.

Stew was formally recognized numerous times for his contributions, including the Joseph E. Carrigan award, as Outstanding Herdsman, George D. Aiken VT Agriculturist of the Year, and inductee to the VT Agriculture Hall of Fame, to name a very few. He was asked by then Governor M. Kunin to be her Commissioner of Agriculture.

In 1976 Stew married his second wife, Joan Myers of Waterbury. They relocated to Blush Hill in Waterbury. Stew and Joan were avid gardeners; Harwood Union sports supporters; Ham radio operators; and devoted to animals, including beloved cats and Golden Retrievers, and the annual flock of ducks on their pond. They were active in the Waterbury Fast Squad, McLure's Alumni Band and the Waterbury Community Band. Stew served over 10 years as Waterbury selectman.

Stew retired at age 69, following Joan's gallant battle with cancer in 1997. Named "Professor Emeritus" at UVM, he left a legacy in the agricultural community, but he never left it behind.

Stew spent retirement volunteering at Fletcher-Allen Oncology, as well as with VT Hospice, and cultivating friendships. Stew demonstrated incredible love of and pride in his children and grandchildren, basking in their presence, and surrounding them with his love and devotion. He also continued to make farm visits and attend farmer activities with his son Willie, extending his affection and admiration to many farmers and professionals who other-wise would not have met him.

Stew's highest form of legacy was his family and friendships. He

was predeceased by many beloved: his parents, Charles E., Sr. and Elizabeth (Garvin) Gibson, Marion (Webster) Gibson, Lucia Jean Gibson, David Stewart Gibson, Joan (Myers) Gibson, beloved grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, and dear friends.

Stew leaves dear ones to carry on his memory and works, including: (children) Mary Truax and companion Jeff Holden of Waterbury Center, William Gibson and wife Martha of Ryegate, Vt.; Lucia Burke and husband Sam of Berlin, Vt.; (grandchildren) Byron Truax and wife Penny of Morrisville, Vt.; Ethan and Jesse Burke of Berlin, Vt.; Angela Dempsey of Norfolk, Va.; Philip, John, Isaac, Kateri, Celine, Anthony and Daniel Gibson of Ryegate, Vt.; (great grandchildren) Hannah and Lydia Truax of Morrisville, Vt.; and Mya Dempsey of Norfolk, Va.; (brother) Charles E. Gibson, Jr. and wife Joanne of Montpelier, Vt. Many dear friends include Stew's best friend from STJA, Dick Hovey and wife Dot of Peacham, Vt.; the rest of his beloved classmates of '46; and so many more.... all beloved by Stew.

A Christian Memorial Service will be held on Saturday, Oct. 19, at 11 a.m. at the South Ryegate, VT Presbyterian Church, Rev. Catherine Cook presiding. All are welcome. Stories, pictures, memorabilia are encouraged. A luncheon in Stew's honor will immediately follow at the Church.

The Ricker Funeral Home, Woodsville, NH website hosts the obituary and offers an on-line guestbook. Go to <http://rickerfh.com/>

If you would like to contribute to a cause in honor of Stew, the family suggests: research for cancer, HIV, Alzheimer's; hospice care; the Cottage Hospital, Woodsville, NH; or the VT 4-H Youth Agriculture Project (<http://www.uvm.edu/extension/youth/yap/>)