

Joseph Carbone on A.C. Gilbert

The following email was sent to David Gilbert and Jeff Marsted by Joseph Carbone, President & CEO of The WorkPlace. Joe served as Master of Ceremonies at the October 8, 2015 induction ceremony for the American Manufacturing Hall of Fame. A.C. Gilbert was one of six 2015 inductees into the Hall.

Mr.'s Gilbert and Marsted,

Indeed it was a pleasure to meet you both at the Hall of Fame dinner this week. Although I served as emcee for the event, I had not seen the film clip on your grandfather's work prior to the event. But wow did it bring back memories. Although I never met him, Mr. Gilbert influenced my life immensely and I wanted to share some thoughts with you.

You might recall that I told the dinner guest that as a child I lived less than 2 blocks from the Peck Street factory. As I think back to that period of my life, I'm reminded of those special moments that made indelible marks on my mind and influenced the course of my life. Your grandfather's personal values and his incredible imagination has had that effect on my life. His generosity to his community and his compassion for his workforce were qualities he didn't wear on his sleeve but practiced routinely as if natural every day. He was blessed to dream and imagine and he used it as only a true visionary could. His life and his creations have impacted science and human character for the many generations that succeeded him.

America's children were inspired and challenged by Mr. Gilbert's creations. Only Walt Disney in years to come would have a capacity to mesmerize children and even parents as Mr. Gilbert did. I used to enjoy window shopping 12 months a year at the Gilbert plant. From Fillmore Street to the plant entrance there were several windows that would display Gilbert toys in action. The window features would periodically change so kids would visit often looking for that new display. My older brothers would take turns walking with me since it involved crossing two busy streets. That was a treat for me, better than a movie and the only way my mom could get me to eat broccoli.

Mr. Gilbert's interaction with his workforce and his contributions to local charities were a model that no employer matched at that time. His outreach to the plant neighbors by affording them the same discount on toy purchases as employees was testament that neighbors wasn't just a word to Mr. Gilbert. Area churches were allowed to use the plant parking area on Sundays. If it snowed on Saturday, the lots were plowed for church parishioners. Only a few folks ever knew that Mount Sacred Heart in Hamden was Mr. Gilbert's property and primarily used for hunting. With his generous support, the nuns have transformed the property to serve the young with education and the infirmed old with quality daycare.

All the examples I cite of Mr. Gilbert's values have one notable common trait. A.C. Gilbert the man, the neighbor, the humanitarian, didn't seek, want or accept any recognition, credit or award for any of them. He was humble and saw privilege as an

obligation to do for others. In so many ways, Mr. Gilbert was an unsung hero of his era. His life influenced succeeding generations to be chemist, scientist or to simply make something. I invite you both to come visit The WorkPlace someday. I never said this before but by the nature of our work and our institutional ethos, we are an outgrowth of those indelible memories I reference earlier. Your grandfather influenced many of them. That's quite an admission since A.C. Gilbert was a man I never met.

Best, Joe

Joseph Carbone
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Bridgeport, Conn.