

Corinne Gilb, 77, visionary historian

ATHERTON PUBLISHER WAS ONCE DETROIT'S CITY PLANNER

By Sue Chenoweth

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Before Corinne Lathrop and Tyrell Gilb tied the knot in 1945, she spoke of her intention to pursue a career. And that was fine with him — even decades later in 1968, when she accepted a job as a history professor at Wayne State University.

But instead of relocating the family, Mrs. Gilb commuted from their home in Berkeley to the school in Detroit for 25 years. During an interim, Mrs. Gilb was director of planning for the city of Detroit for six years.

After her retirement from Wayne State in 1994, she and her husband moved to Atherton. It was there that she died on Jan. 20, seven months after learning she had breast cancer. She was 77.

Tyrell Gilb, who was vice president and director of development at Simpson Strong-Tie in San Leandro, died in July 2001.

Mrs. Gilb wrote several books, contributed to professional journals and lectured internationally on history and public policy. She was also versed in seven languages.

"Mother left behind a landslide of papers," said her oldest daughter, Lesley Gilb Taplin. She also left a collection of 8,000 books, she said, and numerous articles, reviews and another book she wrote called "The World's Earliest Cities," which will be published posthumously.

Her mother also wrote about her upbringing; about being raised on her grandparents' farm in Alberta, Canada; and about her Puritan roots. The life of a family forebear, the Rev. John Lathrop — whose church provided the financial backing for the May-

CORINNE L. GILB

Born: Feb. 19, 1925 in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

Died: Jan. 20, 2003 in Atherton.

Survived by:

Daughters Lesley Gilb Taplin of Santa Monica and Tyra Gilb of Atherton; brothers Lew Lathrop of Seattle and Dan Lathrop of Silverdale, Wash.; and two grandchildren.

Services: A private family service has been held.

Memorial: Contributions in Corinne L. Gilb's name can be made to the Humane Society of Santa Clara Valley, 2530 Lafayette St., Santa Clara, Calif. 95050.



flower in 1620 — provided fodder.

Mrs. Gilb was a student at the University of Washington when she married. She graduated a year later, then studied at the University of California-Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law and later earned a doctorate at Harvard University.

Mrs. Gilb joined Mills College in Oakland as a history lecturer in 1957. Before Mills, she developed and directed the Regional Cultural Oral History Project at UC-Berkeley's Bancroft Library. She spent several years as a research associate at the school's Institute of Industrial Relations and the Center for the Study of Law and Society. From 1963 to 1964, she served as a special consultant to the California Legislature, and from 1964 to 1968, she was a humanities professor at San Francisco State University.

Mrs. Gilb was in Paris on a Guggenheim fellowship in 1968

when she accepted the offer to teach at Wayne State. For 10 years, she was co-director of the Liberal Arts Urban Studies Program. And from 1979 to 1985, Mrs. Gilb supervised the creation of a new master plan for Detroit's first black mayor, Coleman Young. Her strategy: to diversify the city's troubled economy — then dominated by the auto industry — in favor of the coming computer revolution.

Mrs. Gilb was a visiting scholar at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University in the fall of 1993. In 1997, she founded Atherton Press, while continuing her own writings, lectures and world travels. Over the years, she was active in many organizations, including the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, the World Affairs Council of Northern California, the Commonwealth Club and various academic associations.

"Our upbringing was unique, but it worked for our family," said Tyra Gilb, the family's youngest daughter.

"I was raised on the phone," she said. "Lesley was mother's research assistant, and I got to be playground queen."

Her father liked to be off by himself inventing things, she added. And whenever her mother was home, she remembers being awakened in the wee hours by noise from the typewriter.

"Mother was a visionary who remained tethered to reality," said Tyra Gilb. At the time of Mrs. Gilb's death, she was preparing a manuscript comparing the dot-com revolution with the automobile industry.

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