



## Roupén Metcalf Gulbenk

October 16, 1920 - February 18, 2017

Age 96, died peacefully on February 18, 2017 surrounded by his family. A native Nashvillian, Mr. Gulbenk was born on October 16, 1920 to first generation German and Armenian immigrants. He attended Peabody Demonstration School and graduated from Vanderbilt University where he was captain of the tennis team.

A World War II veteran and member of the Greatest Generation, Mr. Gulbenk attended the Great Lakes Naval Training School in Chicago, Illinois before serving his country in the United States Navy. He achieved the rank of Lieutenant Senior Grade Navigator and served on five battleships, including the USS Fredrick Funston.

After the war, he joined his father at Gulbenk Engraving Company, leading the company for over 30 years until its sale. Upon retirement, he took his lifelong love of Americana and founded Cinnamon Hill Antiques, a nationally known gallery focusing on fine 18th and 19th century American furniture and decorative arts. He was founder and chairman of the Tennessee Executive Residence Preservation Foundation, helping to furnish the residence with fine American antiques.

An accomplished violinist, Mr. Gulbenk was an original member of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra. He was also a member of the Downtown

Nashville Rotary Club, the Nashville City Club and attended First Baptist Church. He adored all racquet sports and was a competitive racquetball player throughout his adult life. One of his proudest accomplishments was serving as a founding member of the Green Hills branch of the YMCA of Middle Tennessee for which he received the YMCA Cornerstone Award.

During the war, Mr. Gulbenk married Mary Sue Barnette with whom he made glorious music, enjoyed decorative arts and raised two daughters. After her death, he married Mildred Joy Cowan who introduced him to travel, which they enjoyed immensely.

A man can consider himself blessed to be married to a godly woman, and God saved the best one for last. In 2008, he married Billie Jean Phillips Riegle, fondly known as "Bitsy". Together, they spearheaded the DAR's project to place portraits of our founding fathers in every school throughout middle Tennessee and worked tirelessly for the Shepherd Center helping the elderly in need.

He is predeceased by his daughter Sue Ellen Gulbenk Justus and wives Mary Sue Barnette Gulbenk and Mildred Joy Cowan Gulbenk. He is survived by daughter Elizabeth (Betty) Gulbenk Balentine (Robert) of Atlanta, GA, son-in-law James William Justus, III (Mary) of Lyles, TN, grandchildren James Reuben Justus of Nashville, TN and Elizabeth Balentine Gurley (Hank), Emily Balentine Barbour (Charles), and Robert McGee Balentine, III of Atlanta, GA, great grandchildren Henry Davis Gurley, Jr., Robert Charles Barbour, Elizabeth Haywood Gurley, Sarah Batson Gurley, and Mary Benson Barbour, all of Atlanta, GA.

Roupen never lacked for a story to tell or a joke to make. He loved life to the very end. On his 96th birthday he asked if he could say a few words. He told his family not to be afraid of getting old because life just keeps on getting

better. At least for him, it seemed so.

Services will be held on Monday, February 20 at 1:30 pm at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville, preceded by a visitation at 12:30 pm. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to The Shepherd's Center, P.O. Box 1243, Madison, TN 37116.

PHILLIPS-ROBINSON FUNERAL HOME, (615)262-3312.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Roupen Metcalf Gulbenk*

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October 14, 2022 at 08:02 PM



“ *My sincere condolences on behalf of my late husband. Butch Horton worked for Gulbenk in the 70s. He admired Mr Gulbenk and was very appreciative of the trade he learned during his employment.*

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**Rosalyn Horton** - February 21, 2017 at 03:44 AM