



Gentlemen, our teammate on the Undefeated '59 Frosh, Tom Gildehaus, passed away March 10.

Tom was first team All-New England center at Andover (class of 1958). Fellow Andover graduate Hank Higdon recalls Tom:

"Gildehaus was a star center and killer linebacker. He truthfully was the Ben Balme of our team—quick, strong, explosive, smart, and he had an unmistakable mean streak in him. He was a hitter. He had the mentality, ferocity, and field presence of a Jim Pappas. I thought Gildy would start on any college team, any place, in any league."

Tom took a year off before coming to Yale and joining the '59 Frosh. He competed at the center position against a very deep and richly talented group of athletes: Tex Younger, 1958 All New England; Erik Jensen All State Iowa; Robert Clark All American (high school); Jim Thompson All Metropolitan (DC & Maryland) as well as Mike Freeland and Gar Murtha who were both standout players for their prep schools. Gildy, as we called him, was a tough competitor. He played a lot freshman year and was asked to come to fall football camp as a sophomore, but broke his arm and was lost for most of the season. Tom and I had a good relationship as undergraduates. He told me how it was that he came not to graduate from Andover, but to matriculate a year later with our class. At Yale we both endured the consequences of the exuberant profligacy of youth and managed to undermine our athletic prospects. Tom, despite his extraordinary athletic talent, was unrecognized.

As Hank Higdon says, sometimes our disappointments are more instructive than our successes, provided that we refuse to feel sorry for ourselves or dwell on what might have been. Tom and I had our disappointments. We both profited from them...in my case all I had to do was to remember the lessons learned on "the playing fields of Choate" and as they say in Tex Younger's neck of the plains, "dance with what brung me."

Tom went on to a brilliant academic career at Harvard Business School. Classmate Peter Kiernan recalls that Tom graduated as a Baker Scholar, the Harvard version of Phi Beta Kappa. After business school Tom was a senior executive at John Deere and was one of two individuals considered for the CEO position. Although he was not selected, according to one John Deere heir, Tom was the family favorite to take the helm of that company. After John Deere Tom was the head of UNR Industries Inc., a company that made cell towers and was the largest manufacturer of grocery shopping carts in the U.S. Thereafter he was a co-investor with Kohlberg & Co., ran a steel company in Illinois and a small grocery chain in Arizona. Tom retired in 2000 and spent his time serving on boards and travelling.

Tom was a very special man. In recent years, I was fortunate to speak with him several times, urging him to come to New Haven for the opening of the Kenney Center in 2009, the 50<sup>th</sup> reunion of the '60 team in 2010 and our 1963 class reunion. Had his wife not been in poor health during the football gatherings, he would have joined us. He was considering coming to the 50<sup>th</sup> Class Reunion but did not. Perhaps he knew something that he did not share with us.

As he remarked in his class essay he had more than his share of heartache, losing two wives and a son. I shall miss Tom, but whenever the urge of Hawaiian Hedonism is upon me I shall think of him, smile and remember "the coaches are watching."

Aloha Gildy  
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