

JoAnn Gilham, former legislator, dies at 77

■ JoAnn Gilham served three terms from Hilton Head Island as a conservative, evangelical Republican.

BY DAVID LAUDERDALE
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JoAnn Gilham, for years a leading conservative, evangelical voice in Beaufort and Jasper counties and a former state representative from Hilton Head Island, died Wednesday, Aug. 17, 2016, in Columbia. She was 77.

She died of cancer, which was diagnosed in February, said daughter Leslie Gilham Tapp.

Gilham served many leadership roles in the Republican Party and was elected to represent District 123 in the S.C. House of Representatives from 1998 to 2004.

Gilham, who had been a school teacher and guidance counselor, focused on education at the Statehouse. She was a strong advocate for school choice. In her last term, she pushed unsuccessfully for a program called "Put-

ting Parents in Charge" that would have given tax credits to parents who wanted their children to be educated in a private school, transfer to a different public school or learn at home.

"There are kids in this state that are being left behind, and they are the most needy kids," she said.

She was cited as the



Gilham

chief sponsor of two major pieces of legislation.

One lowered the alcohol concentration at which a person may be inferred to be under the influence of alcohol from 0.10 to 0.08.

The other was the DMV Reform Act that separated the Department of Motor Vehicles from the Department of Public Safety to be more efficient and responsive to the needs of citizens.

Gilham retired after three terms, fulfilling a term-limitation promise.

Gilham was a Columbia native who moved to the

Lowcountry in 1963 when her husband, Dr. Louis B. "Ben" Gilham, opened a dental practice in Ridgeland. Their two sets of twin girls and a son were reared there and on Hilton Head, when Dr. Gilham opened a practice on the island in 1973.

She served on the board of the Forest Beach Association, Beaufort County Community in Schools and was a member of the Professional Women of Hilton Head and a charter member of the Bluffton Lions Club. She was an advocate for the mentally ill.

She attended the University of South Carolina and Luther Rice Seminary. She was a Sunday school teacher at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Ridgeland and was a lay counselor at Community Bible Church on Hilton

Head.

She wrote for her obituary that her "greatest treasure was knowing Jesus Christ as her Savior and Lord, her husband, children and all her grandchildren and great-grandchildren."

Gilham moved to Columbia in 2006 to be closer to family when her husband, who survives her, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

The funeral will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday at Dunbar Funeral Home, Devine Street Chapel, with the Rev. Mike Baer and the Rev. Roy Graves officiating, with burial in Greenlawn Memorial Park. The family will receive friends from 5 to 7 p.m. Saturday at the funeral home.

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JoAnne Goldson Gilham

COLUMBIA - A funeral service for JoAnne Goldson Gilham, 77, will be held at 2pm, on Sunday, August 21, 2016, at Dunbar Funeral Home, Devine Street Chapel, with Reverend Mike Baer and Reverend Roy Graves officiating the service, with burial in Greenlawn Memorial Park. The family will receive friends from 5:00 until 7:00 p.m. Saturday, August 20, 2016, at the funeral home.

Mrs. Gilham died Wednesday, August 17, 2016. She was born on June 15, 1939 in

Columbia.

While living in Ridgeland, SC she was a member of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, active in the community, taught Sunday school at St. Paul's and also taught kindergarten. Later she became a member of Calvary Baptist Church and was a teacher at Calvary Christian Academy. After moving to Hilton Head, she was a member of Grace Community Church. She loved sharing the Lord Jesus and the hope we have in him. She served as a lay counselor at Grace.

She served on the Forest Beach Board and was active in the Republican Party in Beaufort County as Credentials Chair and was recording Secretary of Hilton Head Republican Club. She was a member of the 1st Mon. Republican Club and later was elected to represent District 123 in the SC House of Representatives (1998-2004) where she served on the Education and Public Works Committee and chaired the Motor Vehicles Committee (2003-2004). She was also assigned to the House Rules Committee. On Hilton Head she was a member of the Greater Island Committee, on the Board of Nami and the SC Policy Council in Columbia. In 2004 she was presented the Order of Palmetto.

Her greatest treasure was knowing Jesus Christ as her Savior and Lord, her husband, children and all her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

She was predeceased by her parents, Hubert F. Goldson and Evelyn W. Goldson; and her brother,

Clement F. Goldson (DeDe).

Surviving are her husband of 58 years, Dr. Louis B. Gilham, Jr.; children, Sherry Johnston (Chris) of Hilton Head Island, Leslye Tapp (Billy) of Beaufort, Joanie Whigham of Lawrenceville, Georgia, Lynne Houser of Columbia, and Trey Gilham (Jody) of Columbia; grandchildren, Caylee Snelling (Drew), Danielle Raymond (John), Morgan Johnston, Krystin Walker (Chris), Pete and Regan Tapp, Jeffery and Brighton Whigham, David Houser, and Emma, Ben, Wil, and Jax Gilham; great-grandchildren, Jo and Dean Snelling, Shea Raymond, and Maggie and Georgia Walker; brother, Charles H. Goldson (Cherry) of St. Petersburg, Florida; sister-in-law, Betsy Gilham (Tad); several nieces and nephews; and godson, Taylor Henry.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Grace Community Church Missions, 450 Spanish Wells Rd., Hilton Head Island, SC 29926; or C.M. Tucker, Jr. Nursing Care Center, 2200 Hardin St. Columbia, SC 29203.

Please sign the online guestbook at www.dunbarfunerals.com.

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