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[Hans Nansen funeral remarks]

In our forty years of friendship, my admiration for the late Honorable Earl B. Gilliam grew with each adventure we had. His natural charm and dignity bespoke a character far greater than any robe, degree or credential could ever impart. During the twenty-two years that we attended Charger football games together, I was always fascinated by how Earl was always welcomed by total strangers at their tailgate parties. I was amazed at how easily he moved between diverse groups of people of all ages as if he had known them all of his life. But my greatest moment of admiration came the day he convinced an Idaho sheriff to drive almost 90 miles to check on me where we had broken down on a lonely country interstate in the middle of nowhere.

A few years ago, a friend of ours asked me if I would fly to Montana and drive a thirty-four foot motor home back to San Diego for him. Earl was here at the time the offer was made and he thought that sounded like fun and offered to accompany me. An amusing flight was followed by the grim realization on our arrival in Montana that the motor home was in an open field, with a dead battery, no license plates, and no registration, which had not been mentioned to us prior to our departure. Using his charm, Earl talked a fellow into starting the beast for us. Knowing we would immediately need a new battery, not knowing what we would do about our other problems on a weekend morning, we headed for the first battery outlet we could find. Earl supervised the installation to make sure that we two city guys got our money worth and the battery was properly installed.

Approximately one hour after leaving Butte, we were on a two lane temporary highway when the battery exploded. This woke Earl up and he dove for the floor, thinking perhaps that we were encountering unfriendly natives. Not wanting to stop on the temporary freeway and create a hazard I took evasive action and drove down the embankment and up the other side onto the newly graded freeway. I found the Judge on the floor, towards the back of the home, near the bed with his limbs in every which direction. In spite of the expertly monitored installation, upon careful inspection at a later time, it was determined that the battery had been installed backwards.

Seeing as how we were in the middle of nowhere, Earl took it upon himself to attempt to hitchhike to the next town. I laughed and told him good luck. I sat in the shade in the relatively cool motor home and giggled watching Earl standing out in the middle of nowhere in his white tennis shorts and high-top Converse tennis shoes scanning the horizon for cars. Intermittently I warned him of the potential number of folks up in the country carrying firearms in their vehicles.

To my amazement, the very first car that passed was a middle-aged couple, who stopped to talk to Earl. The woman driving instructed her husband to get out and sit in the backseat so Earl would be more comfortable on the trip. This sent me into hysterics causing the woman to ask Earl what in the world I thought was so funny, and they left. Earl waved out the window, and he went on his way.

I sat waiting and wondering what a sheriff or highway patrol officer would do to me and my pirate motor home. Four hours later, the hour of judgement came and I watched a sheriff's patrol car stop to the side of the road, the sheriff approached the home, and knocked on the door. With my heart in my throat, I answered. The sheriff took a look at me and asked if I were "Hans". I said yes. He informed me that "The Judge" was in the next town having lunch with some of the folks, and that he had asked the sheriff to do him a favor and come an hour or more back to tell his stranded friend that he was working on getting us a tow from another town, Idaho Falls, some forty-five minutes in the other direction. When I asked the sheriff if Earl had sent me back a sandwich, he just laughed.

Six hours later, Earl came riding in one of the biggest tow trucks I had ever seen, which I imagine was used for the freeway construction. Again, he had not brought a sandwich or even a soft drink. I apologized for my lack of faith and promised that I would never doubt again, thinking that it if ever happened again, and I didn't laugh so hard, maybe he'd bring me a snack.

I will miss him and his friendship and love him for the rest of my life. For these kinds of friendships, and this kind of man, come once in a lifetime.

Signed, By Earl's beloved friend Hans Nansen