



John Philo Hall Sr.

July 13, 1928 - July 24, 2021

Ushered out by a full moon, John (Jack, Gus) Philo Hall, Sr., born July 13, 1928, died in Cheney, Washington early in the morning on July 24, 2021. Gus (a nickname he picked up in college) never forgot his North Country roots in the Adirondack town of Inlet, New York. With a local reputation as a scrappy athlete with a zest for a hard physical challenge and ever-present humor, he headed off to St. Lawrence University in the fall of 1945, at his father's urging, uncertain that college would be better than hoisting milk cans—or other various “size eighteen-inch neck, size six hat” jobs at his dad's businesses.

Gus quickly earned a name for himself on campus with his athletic prowess, and by 1948 was the second man on the Varsity Ski Team, typically placing in 4 events: downhill, cross-country, combined classic and, the event he was enthralled by, jumping. However, on Saturday, January 17, 1948, a tragic accident changed his life forever. He would later say, it changed his life for “the good.”

After ski team practice with four other friends, while heading back to campus in a convertible coupe, the car hit an icy patch going into a curve, striking a concrete culvert. There was one fatality, the driver suffered serious internal injuries, and Gus, who was trapped in the car on a frigid North Country evening for over 90 minutes, had crushed both legs. It was predicted he would lose his right leg and might never walk again, let alone ski. It was in the long,

painful recovery from this accident that his true character was forged, and he met the love of his life, a fellow ski team member, Pat Davenport. Calling him a “fine example of courage,” the President of St. Lawrence at the time suggested that perhaps Gus’ one mission in life would be for him “to stiffen other’s backbones by reason of his example.” Indeed, he has.

With remarkable grit and tenacity, Gus went on to receive his BA from St. Lawrence in 1950. Along the way he became the captain of the ski team and won the heart of Pat Davenport, marrying “his bride,” as he called her throughout their 67-year marriage, in 1951. Within three months, his father had died, and the newlyweds headed back to Inlet, where Gus took over his father’s assorted business ventures. With a rapidly growing family, to make ends meet he continued to haul logs, and drive a school bus, in addition to running a store, dairy and gas station. But Gus aspired to a life that included more frequent rounds of golf and working seven days a week and holidays did not permit that. He knew it was time for him to “make a living with his head and not his hands.”

By 1961, Gus and Pat had moved the family to the Hudson Valley, and Gus revived a professional interest he had explored fresh out of college—the insurance business. He developed his passion for “fitting the policy to the person,” transforming that passion into a career that spanned nearly five decades. Along the way, that “iron spirit” of his fueled two significant educational endeavors, each requiring weekly commutes to Albany, as he earned both his CLU and CPCU designations while working full-time running his own insurance agency, studying early in the morning and late at night in a study cubicle in the attic of the busy family home.

Contrary to all medical predictions, Gus did ski again, teaching his five children to ski as well, and was a proud member of the 70+ Ski Club. An avid hunter, he made annual pilgrimages to the Adirondacks, to a beloved log

cabin in Big Moose, where his storytelling was more memorable than the bucks he bagged. A dedicated golfer, he rarely missed a Tuesday Night League round at Wiltwyck Country Club. A Sunday School teacher, at large family gatherings of multiple generations, it was Gus that was called upon to bless the meal. He was also a long serving member on the Ulster County Board of Health. Gus was admired for his ever-ready sense of adventure, a belief in the possibility just around the corner, his gumption in the hard moments, and, as was predicted back in 1948, his ability to inspire others through his gung-ho attitude and his impressive persistence against the odds.

Predeceased by his wife, Patricia Davenport Hall, and two of his five children, Richard Scott Hall and Harry Davenport Hall, Gus will join them, with bagpipes playing, in the family plot at Benton Bar Cemetery, at a date to be determined—and held regardless of the weather! He is survived by his sons John Philo Hall, Jr. (Evelyn) and Ronald Hall (Lisa), daughter Trudy Hall, grandchildren Lisa, Sarah, Tori, Shaelyn, RJ and Nick, and his great-grandson Jackson, whose toddler antics made Gus laugh. Gus' family is sincerely grateful to the patient and caring staff of Cheney Care Community, a non-profit senior resident community, where Gus has resided since 2010. Memorials may be sent to Cheney Care Center Association, 2229 N. 6th Street, Cheney, WA, 99004.