

## ***Distinguished Alumni Award: Gilbert C. Barner, class of 1952***



Gil "Bud" Barner is a Renaissance man, by any definition.

After U-High graduation, Gil began working in data processing at State Farm, to help support his family following the death of his father and debilitating illness of his mother. His 2 younger sisters, Linda Boyd and Bonnie Williams, still live here. After his mother returned from an extensive stay in the hospital, he enlisted in the army for 3 years, where he served first in data processing and then for 2 years in Army Intelligence. After a stint with a construction equipment manufacturing firm and a business equipment manufacturer, he invested in a small company in Lake Forest, IL, and developed it well. During that time he also served as president of the Kiwanis Club, President of the

Chamber of Commerce for two consecutive years, and served on the Boards of the American Red Cross and the Lake Forest Symphony. For four and one-half years he was Police and Fire Commissioner, hiring the first female police officer in the State of Illinois, and among the first in the country!

Following the sale of what had become multiple businesses, he began doing "start-ups" (starting new firms for others under contract), and "turnarounds" (fixing 'broken' companies), and thus has served as Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, and Senior Management for growing firms for the past 20+ years. Gil has taken a computer products wholesale distributor from "start-up" to roughly \$55 million in 24 months, and turned around a troubled firm near Washington, D.C. that was dealing with the U.S. Congress. In "fixing" that firm, he walked the halls of Congress 2-3 days a week, appeared before various committees and sub-committees, and worked directly with many Congressmen. He later served as CEO of a control equipment manufacturer whose fortunes had dropped dramatically. It was a "turnaround" venture, where he took a struggling company and brought it back to life in only 15 months. His "turnaround" work with regional firms has involved him with a diverse series of contract assignments throughout the United States, India, Taiwan, as well as offices throughout Central and South America, and Eastern Europe.

Gil was instrumental in starting a major international non-profit for children with learning differences, All Kinds of Minds. Based on the work of pediatrician Dr. Mel Levine, this organization has become a model for setting up entrepreneurial non-profits and does amazingly successful work with children. Dr. Levine has been on the N.Y. Times Best Seller book list 3 times. Gil served as start-up Executive Director and a member of the board that was co-chaired by Charles Schwab.

Gil's business success and commitments to life have engaged his talents. He has an earned certificate in Non-profit Management from Duke University, and has served on various special boards of a number of large corporations including IBM, Remington, Sharp Electronics and major national business associations and charitable boards. He

has done extended work with the Wharton Business School, taught as a guest lecturer at the graduate and undergraduate level at George Mason University, and done extensive teaching, speaking and lecturing on a broad range of life, management, and business topics. He has served as the Executive-in-Residence for the Small Business Technology and Development Centers of the Business School at the University of North Carolina.

Gil is actively involved in community and regional affairs, having served as a member of the Council on Entrepreneurial Development, on the Program and Venture Capital committees, and on the Investment Advisory Board for the North Carolina Technological Development Authority. He was a member of the Kenan-Flager Simulation Board and judged the Wachovia Cup business competition within the University of North Carolina's MBA program. He was a nominee for the position of Dean of the School of Business at North Carolina State University.

There is even more to this Renaissance man. He enjoys white water rafting, sailing, reading, competitive shooting, poetry, and writing. He participates in the Senior Games in the State of North Carolina, entering in some area each year, competing in everything from tennis to photography to literary categories. This year he won 2 Gold and 2 Silver medals in poetry and short stories, as well as a Silver and a Bronze in photography.

He is also currently writing a book about Rascal Sherlock Barner, the family's 10-year old cat, whom he says is "appropriately named. He's the epitome of curiosity."

Gil and his wife Patricia live in the Piedmont area of North Carolina just west of the Atlantic and east of the Blue Ridge and Appalachian mountains, and about 40 miles from Chapel Hill, N.C. Patricia is a nationally certified body massage therapist and also serves on the admin/faculty/staff of the Body Therapy Institute. Gil has two adult children and 4 grandchildren. Bud, as he was known in high school until being an adult caught up with him, says that no memories are fonder than his 4 years at U-High. "I took it as unspoken that U-High was put together specifically for me to major in extra-curricular activities...that is, until Dr. Lovelass sat me down in his office my senior year and explained the real purpose of U-High in my life. I tried to explain how school would seriously conflict with my football schedule, drama, band, orchestra, track and playing the bass violin in dance bands on weekend for extra money, among others. He and Mr. Almy, Miss Stroud, Miss Chiles and Mr. Farnsworth, among many, finally were able to press home some logic."

"I'm humbled, surprised and proud of being selected to receive such an honor as the Distinguished Alumni Award, particularly coming as it does from a nationally recognized lab school such as University High School," Gil said.