



William Gekis

November 17, 1923 - March 9, 2017

William Gekis, who died on March 9, 2017, was born November 17, 1923 in Broadacre, Ohio, the seventh of eight children born to Nicholas Theodore Gekis and Vasiliki Kaloyerakis. He grew up in the small farming community of Conesville, Ohio, but at an early age he realized that he had no interest in farming. He gravitated to art and with no money for supplies he created work by stretching flour sacks into canvases and drawing with charcoal pulled from the family fireplace. Several tragedies befell the family throughout the years. In 1927, his sister Garoufalia died in a fire. A boating accident in 1931 took the lives of his three older brothers, Theodore, Sam and George Gekis. In 1933 his mother had a severe stroke, and he took care of her until her death in 1943. In 1969 his sister Catherine was murdered, a victim of domestic violence. More recently sisters Mary Mobley and Dorothy Anthimiades passed away of natural causes.

He entered the service on April 20, 1943 and served as Seaman First Class in the United States Navy. A gunner on troop transports, he participated in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of war. He was in both the invasion on Salerno on September 3, 1943 and D-Day on June 6, 1944 at Utah and Omaha Beach. The night before the invasion of Normandy, his deceased Mother came to him in a dream. The sky was blackened with bombs bursting in the air, but his Mother stood before him with her apron extended, deflecting all the bombs. When he woke up, he knew that he had nothing to fear in the war, and would never fear for his life again because his Mother would be there

to protect him. He is the recipient of The American Area Ribbon, The European-African Middle Eastern Area Ribbon, The Asiatic - Pacific Area Ribbon, and The World War II Victory Ribbon.

After the war, awaiting his discharge at Treasure Island in San Francisco, his Father told him to go down south to Santa Barbara because the family had friends there. When he arrived it was the first Fiesta since the war had ended, and it felt as if the whole town was throwing a party for him, and his 70-year love affair with Santa Barbara began. He attended the Art Institute in Los Angeles, CA on the GI Bill, and as a starving artist he brought his father out to Santa Barbara to live with him. Shortly thereafter he met the love of his life, Helen Mouzes, at a Greek social. They were married February 19, 1951 in Carmel, CA. Together for 50 years they owned and operated the Nicholas Salon of Beauty in Santa Barbara. He never starved again, and he never ceased to paint and create art. He worked in all media -- oils, acrylics, watercolors, pastel, charcoal, and sculpture. Over the course of his life he created thousands of works of art, many of which are displayed in private collections throughout the United States and Europe. Both he and his wife, Midwesterners by birth, lived out their California dream together for sixty-four years in Santa Barbara.

William Gekis was preceded in death by his wife Helen Mouzes Gekis on June 5, 2015. He is survived by his sons Nicholas B. Gekis of Santa Barbara, CA and Theodore B. Gekis of Los Angeles, CA. A tribute video by his son Theodore is at: <https://vimeo.com/209801242> A service will be held on Monday, March 20, 2017 at 11 AM at Saint Barbara's Greek Orthodox Church. Interment and reception will immediately follow. In lieu of flowers please send donations to Saint Barbara's Greek Orthodox Church.

Cemetery Details

Santa Barbara Cemetery

901 Channel Drive
Santa Barbara, CA 93108
(805) 969-3231

Previous Events

Funeral Service

MAR 20. 11:00 AM (PT)

Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church
1205 San Antonio Creek Rd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93111
<http://saintbarbara.net>

Tribute Wall

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Scott C Reid - March 15, 2017 at 04:42 PM