

# OBITUARIES

## Oldest surviving Pullman porter dies at 106

BY ANN M. SIMMONS  
LOS ANGELES TIMES

LOS ANGELES — Lee Wesley Gibson, believed to have been the oldest living Pullman porter, died as he lived — calm, quiet and in control — sitting in a chair at home Saturday with family members at his side.

Gibson was 106 years old. “He had just celebrated his birthday five weeks earlier, and he thanked everyone,” family friend Rosalind Stevenson said.

Gibson began work as a coach attendant with Union Pacific Railroad in 1936 at the height of the Great Depression. He was later promoted to Pullman porter, one of the uniformed railway men who served first-class passengers traveling in luxurious sleeping cars. It was a much-coveted job that improved the fortunes of many struggling African-Americans at the time.

During a 38-year career, Gibson traveled the country, rubbing shoulders with celebrities and taking pride in the role, though it involved long hours and occasional indignities. Porters were required to respond to the name “George” after the founder of the Pullman Palace Car Co., George Pullman.

“It was hard, but it was fun,” Gibson told the Los Angeles Times in a 2010 interview.

He said the job helped him to “feed my family ... take care of them.”

Gibson purchased a brand new family home in 1945 in

South Los Angeles and lived in it until his death.

The second child of West Gibson and Annie (Pugh) Gibson, Lee Gibson was born May 21, 1910, in Keatchie, Louisiana. After his parents separated, his mother moved with the children to Marshall, Texas, where Gibson attended New Town Elementary School and Central High School, family members said.

When Gibson graduated from high school, he wanted to enroll in tailoring school, but the family couldn't afford it. Instead, as a teenager his first job was working at Wiley College and Darco Corp., which made chemical cleaners for dry cleaning. He later worked as a presser at Moon's Cleaners, and eventually bought the business.

In 1927, he married Beatrice Woods, his wife of 76 years. The couple had four children. Lee Jr., Gwendolyn and Barbara were born in Texas. Gloria arrived after the family moved to Los Angeles in 1935 in search of a better life. (Lee Jr. died in 1958 of Hodgkin's disease. Beatrice died in 2004.)

Gibson initially earned his keep in L.A. making sandwiches at a tavern and doing cleaning for a food production company, he told the Times in 2010.

One day in 1936, a deacon at his church who worked for the Union Pacific Railroad as a coach attendant asked Gibson's wife if her husband would be interested in a job with the railroad. It was a golden opportunity,



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Lee Wesley Gibson at age 100 next to a 1937 Pullman Dormitory/Club Car, on display at the Travel Town Museum in Los Angeles. Gibson, the oldest Pullman porter, died last Saturday at 106.

Gibson recalled in his interview with the Times.

The Pullman Co. ended operation of sleeping cars in 1968 and Pullman porters were transferred to Union Pacific and Amtrak. Gibson retired from the railroad in 1974 but kept working.

He served as a volunteer, assisting travelers at Los Angeles International Airport; managed income tax preparation offices for H&R Block; and was district director for the AARP tax preparation assistance program for seniors, family and friends said. Most recently, Gibson was featured in a TV commercial for Dodge titled “Wisdom,” which honored

centenarians, Stevenson said.

He was a devoted member of the 100-year-old People's Independent Church in Los Angeles' Hyde Park neighborhood for 77 years, and attended the Sunday before he died.

“He raised his family in the church,” Bishop Craig Worsham, pastor of the historic house of worship, said. “He is etched in the framework and fabric of the history of the church.”

Gibson served as church treasurer, deacon, elder and an officer of the church credit union, Worsham said.

“He was a very polite gentleman, very encouraging of

the work of the community,” Worsham said. “He had a pleasant spirit, he was gentle, and he excelled at being a father, grandfather and great-grandfather.”

Gwendolyn Reed, 84, Gibson's eldest daughter, said her father doted on her and her sisters, Barbara Leverette, 82, and Gloria Gibson, 71.

When they were girls, the porter would utilize his sewing skills and tailored outfits for his daughters, including their flag girl uniforms. A couple of years ago, Gibson offered to hem a skirt that Reed wanted shortened, she recalled. He started the job, and when

Reed finally insisted on taking the skirt to the dry cleaners to finish the job, the attendant marveled at Gibson's seamstry, Reed recalled.

Known for his immaculate clothes — he often sported designer suits and custom-made dress shirts — Gibson credited his longevity to keeping things simple. He took only a daily vitamin until the day he died, family members said.

Into his 100s, he was fit and alert, taking no medication, seeing without glasses and still driving, until the family insisted he stop at age 102.

“He was such an inspiration,” Stevenson said. “He was a man who truly loved his family and his God. It was just the simplest way to live and he did so successfully.”

Over the years, Gibson received letters congratulating him on his longevity from President Barack Obama, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, and former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. He served as grand marshal for the Watts Christmas Parade in 2010.

“He was a man whose outlook on life was extremely positive,” Reed said. “He didn't believe in the word ‘can't.’”

In addition to his three daughters, Gibson is survived by six grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren, 22 great-great-grandchildren and three great-great-great-grandchildren.

## Man convicted of 1976 homicide dies in Maine prison

BY JUDY HARRISON  
BDN STAFF

WARREN — A man who had served two years of a 20-year sentence for a 1976 homicide after being linked to the crime by his DNA died about 10:30 p.m. Wednesday, according to the Maine Department of Corrections.

Gary Sanford Raub, 67, formerly of Seattle, died at Pen Bay Medical Center in Rockport, Jody Breton, deputy commissioner, said in a press release.

“Consistent with the department's policy and the Maine attorney general's office protocols, the Maine State Police and the medical examiner were notified,” she said. “Both are reviewing the death.”

Raub was arrested in October 2012 in Washington state in connection with the death of Blanche M. Kimball, whose body was found in her State Street home in Augusta on June 12, 1976. An autopsy determined she had been stabbed multiple times.

Raub's arrest set a record for the oldest cold case arrest in Maine history.

In a plea agreement with prosecutors, he was sentenced in June 2014 in Kennebec County Superior Court to 20 years in prison for second-degree criminal homicide. That was the mandatory minimum for the crime 40 years ago when the state classified criminal homicides in six degrees, according to a

previously published report.

Raub, who was going by the name Gary Robert Wilson at the time of the slaying, was extradited to Maine from Washington state in January 2014. He was linked to the cold murder case through DNA evidence after he took part in an undercover “chewing gum survey” in Seattle that police staged. He had rented a room from Kimball in 1976 and was the prime suspect in her murder from the beginning, according to the affidavit filed in the case. Raub denied involvement in her death and left the state a few years later.

He surfaced in fall 2012 in Seattle after he was suspected in the stabbing of another transient. Maine State Police Detective Abbe Chabot, who had taken over the cold case in 2003, worked with Seattle police to match blood from the knife used in the West Coast stabbing to blood found at the Augusta murder scene.

In July 2012, a Seattle police detective posed as a market researcher and asked Raub to participate in a “chewing gum survey,” for which he would be paid \$5. Raub agreed, according to the affidavit. The gum he chewed was sent to the Maine State Police Crime Lab, where investigators concluded that the DNA matched a blood drop found on the kitchen drawer of Kimball's residence after her murder.

Former BDN writer Alex Barber contributed to this report.

## Boatworks gets \$6,000 grant for youth program

ISLESFORD — Islesford Boatworks has received a \$6,000 grant from the Emily and William Muir Community Fund II of the Maine Community Foundation to expand its program to teach boat-building skills to school-age children.

For the last 10 years, Islesford Boatworks has engaged children in building and launching a skiff. Located on Little Cranberry Island, IB works to build opportunity, community and a future for Maine's working waterfront.

The program has grown to include teen and adult

programs, serving more than 150 people last summer.

The \$6,000 grant will help Islesford Boatworks create a new class for Hancock County children who already know the basics of shop safety and have some woodworking skills.

With offices in Ellsworth and Portland, the Maine Community Foundation works with donors and other partners to improve the quality of life for all Maine people.

To learn more about the foundation, visit mainecf.org.

## Author Barbara Goldsmith dies at 85

BY EMILY LANGER  
THE WASHINGTON POST

Barbara Goldsmith, a best-selling writer who chronicled high-society contretemps, including the custody dispute over “poor little rich” Gloria Vanderbilt in the 1930s, unveiling the wealthy and famous as often empty and unhappy, died June 26 at her home in New York City. She was 85.

The cause was congestive heart failure, her assistant Jeremy Steinke said.

Goldsmith was a founding editor of New York magazine, a contributor to publications including Vanity Fair and the New Yorker and the author of four non-fiction books. Her work combined historical sleuthing and social commentary, and it reflected her experience and wariness of wealth.

A daughter of a moneyed real estate investor, Goldsmith said she recognized early on the drawbacks, even dangers, of fame. She said that like Vanderbilt — the railroad and shipping heiress who became a maven of designer jeans — she was scarred by the kidnapping and murder in 1932 of aviator Charles Lindbergh's young son.

“I used to go to bed at night and wait for the sound of the ladder plopping against my bedroom window,” she once told the New York Times. “I’ve since found that a lot of people who grew up during the Depression had these same fears, because of the Lindbergh baby's kidnapping.”

Goldsmith became fascinated by the Vanderbilt case four decades after the fact, while researching her first book, “The Straw Man”

(1975), a novel that turns on the contested estate of a New York art collector. Working in a library, she stumbled upon 8,000 pages of court transcripts from the 1934 custody challenge that made 10-year-old Vanderbilt one of the most famous children in the United States.

The case involved the girl's widowed mother, Gloria Morgan Vanderbilt, and an aunt, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, who ultimately obtained custody. Their war over “little Gloria,” which riveted Depression-era Americans with lurid revelations of the family's dissolution, became the subject of Goldsmith's best-selling volume “Little Gloria ... Happy at Last” (1980).

Goldsmith said she trekked to seven countries for the book and interviewed 300 sources, though not Gloria Vanderbilt, who declined to participate. The book became a 1982 TV miniseries featuring Angela Lansbury, Christopher Plummer and Maureen Stapleton.

“‘Little Gloria’ is like a Bruegel canvas, teeming with characters and events all moving in different directions,” Brigitte Weeks, a Washington Post editor, wrote in a review of the volume. “But even though she gives us a 10-course bandow,” she once told the New York Times. “I’ve since found that a lot of people who grew up during the Depression had these same fears, because of the Lindbergh baby's kidnapping.”

In her research, Goldsmith learned that Cornelius Vanderbilt, the family's shipping and railroad magnate, had once advised aspiring investors to “do as I do, consult the spirits!” He was confident that his stock

was on the rise, he had remarked, because a “Mrs. Woodhull said so in a trance.”

Intrigued by the reference, Goldsmith spent a decade researching the life of Victoria Woodhull, a fortune teller and suffragette who in 1872 launched a quixotic campaign as the first woman to run for president. The result of Ms. Goldsmith's study was the book “Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull” (1998).

In 1987, Goldsmith published “Johnson v. Johnson,” an account of the fight over the estate of J. Seward Johnson, an heir to the riches his family made in the pharmaceutical business. After his death in 1983, his children challenged his will, which left nearly his entire \$500 million estate to his third wife, Barbara Piasecka, a Polish immigrant four decades his junior who had been one of their domestics.

The trial, which Goldsmith covered for Vanity Fair, became a cause celebre and ended with an out-of-court settlement.

“I’ve come to view it as a contest rooted in emotional issues,” she wrote, “feelings of unrequited love, unfinished business, denial, and loss of honor. J. Seward Johnson's behavior toward his children — his patterns of rejection and divisiveness — ultimately led them into a courtroom seeking to find what they had never had from him: recognition, a sense of worthiness and a measure of a father's love. Perhaps restitution for this loss came to be equated with money. But money was all that was left.”

Barbara Joan Lubin was born in New York City on May 18, 1931. She graduated in 1953 from Wellesley College in Massachusetts and began her career profiling celebrities for Women's Home Companion and the New York Herald Tribune. When the latter was shuttered in the 1960s, she provided seed money to spin off the newspaper's Sunday supplement and establish New York magazine.

In 1968, the magazine's inaugural year, Goldsmith penned a profile of the Andy Warhol model Viva. In the article, titled “La Dolce Viva,” the woman was shown in haunting nude images by photographer Diane Arbus and revealed by Goldsmith as penniless and addicted by drugs.

Before running the article, which was guaranteed to roil advertisers with its explicit nature, the editor, Clay Felker, showed it to Tom Wolfe, another of the magazine's writers. Wolfe was enthralled and declared to Felker, “I don't see how you can not run it.”

As predicted, advertisers rebelled, but the episode became famous in the magazine's history.

Goldsmith's most recent book was “Obsessive Genius: The Inner World of Marie Curie” (2005), a biography of the Polish-born physicist who became the first woman to receive a Nobel Prize. Goldsmith's experience in historical archives, where she handled old papers that crumbled at the touch, inspired her to lead a campaign to persuade private and government publishers to print books and documents on acid-free paper.

## Connecticut woman carried off Katahdin

BY NOK-NOI RICKER  
BDN STAFF

BAXTER STATE PARK — It took 10 hours and more than 40 people to carry a 20-year-old hiker from Connecticut off Mount Katahdin Wednesday after she fell and injured herself while descending the Hunt Trail, park officials said.

The woman, who is from from Lakeville, Connecticut, but was not identified, was leading a group of hikers from Camp Kieve-Wavus

based in Nobleboro when she fell and was injured about 2.9 miles up the Hunt Trail at the base of the rocky “Hunt Spur,” Baxter State Park Director Jensen Bissell said in an email.

She cut her leg badly when she fell at about 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, he said by phone.

“Unable to walk, the hiker was treated by park rangers and then carried by litter back to Katahdin Stream Campground, where she was transported by ambulance to Millinocket Regional Hospi-

tal,” Bissell states in the email. “The evacuation required the effort of more than 40 people for nearly 10 hours.”

“We're not doctors. We treat and stabilize people and then get them out of there,” Bissell said, adding that the 10 hours it took to get the injured woman off the mountain started after she was stabilized. “They were out until 9 or 10 [p.m.]. It was a long day.”

In addition to Park Rangers, rescuers included personnel from the Maine As-

sociation of Search and Rescue Wilderness Rescue Team, the Maine Forest Service, Maine Warden Service, Maine Conservation Corps and Park volunteers.

Park officials said that more than 80 percent of hiking accidents on Katahdin requiring evacuation occur on the descent, and they urge hikers to recognize that they are more tired later in the day.

“Falls on the descent can be very hazardous,” Bissell said.