



Robert C. Gibson

November 6, 1937 - February 20, 2025

Robert C. Gibson, PE FNSPE, died peacefully on February 20, 2025, surrounded by his family in Blacksburg, VA. Born in Norfolk on November 6, 1937, he was the son of Nellie Gray Godfrey and James Erwin Gibson. He was predeceased by his parents, and his sister Nancy Spater. He is survived by his sister Joan Lippold, brother William Gibson, daughters Anne Lawson and Katherine Gibson, and their mother Sue Gibson Farrar, Ashley Zehrt and Hayley Owens and their mother Joan Zehrt, stepchildren, Jamie Meriwether, William Meriwether and Missy Dulin as well as two grandsons, Franklin Lawson and Kevin Lawson and a great granddaughter Madison Lawson. Bob grew up in Norfolk and was an overachiever all his life. In 1954, the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce bestowed upon him the Outstanding Teenager Tidewater Award. He graduated from Granby High School in 1953. He attended Virginia Tech where he was Corp Commander, served as Judge of the Honor Court and graduated in 1961 with a degree in Mechanical Engineering.

Bob went into the Army in 1961 and served his country for eight years, including the Army Reserves. He joined Clark Nexsen, an architectural engineering firm that under his leadership grew to be ranked in the top 20 A/E firms in the U.S., became partner in 1979 and was named Virginia Engineer of the Year the same year. In 1985 he was promoted to President, CEO and Chairman of the Board. Other honors included being named as a Fellow by the Institute of Engineers in Ireland in 1989, received the Member of the Year

Award by the National Institute of Building Sciences in 1998, was named as an Eminent Engineer Member of Tau Beta Pi and named as a member of the Steinman Council, N.S.P.E. Education Foundation, both in 1987. Bob served as Chairman of the N.S.P.E. Council until 2003. Citing a few additional highlights, he was President of the Virginia Society of Professional Engineers, President of the National Society of Professional Engineers from 1988-89 and Chairman of the National Institute of Building Sciences from 1991-93.

Bob moved to Blacksburg in 2008, where he was President of the Kiwanis Club whose mission is serving children of the world, one child, one community at a time. His distinguished service to Virginia Tech included serving on the Committee of 100 for the College of Engineering beginning in 1978, and the Industrial Advisory Group for Minority Engineering Programs. He also served on the Virginia Tech Scholarship Committee and on the Engineering Dean's Advisory Board. He was a member of the Virginia Tech Academy of Engineering Excellence, Virginia Tech UT Prosim Society, Virginia Tech Society of Mechanical Engineers, Torch Club, Blacksburg Christian Church and host of Wood's Edge happy hours. A life well lived.

A celebration of Bob's life will be held on Friday, February 28, 2025, at 11am at McCoy Funeral Home, 150 Country Club Dr. SW, Blacksburg, VA. The family will welcome friends from 10am – 11am and a private service will be held after the celebration of his life. In lieu of flowers, those who wish to make memorial contributions may send them to Blacksburg Kiwanis, PO Box 620, Blacksburg, VA 24063 or Blacksburg Christian Church, 240 Watson Ave., Blacksburg, VA 24060.

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB **28**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

McCoy Funeral Home
150 Country Club Dr. S.W.
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 552-3211
mccoyfuneralhome@verizon.net
<https://mccoyfuneralhome.com>

Celebration of Life

FEB **28**. 11:00 AM (ET)

McCoy Funeral Home Chapel
150 Country Club Dr S.W.
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Tribute Wall

“ At Clark Nexsen, we have been fortunate to have some incredible leaders over the years — people who did not just grow the firm, but who shaped its very culture and identity. One of those unforgettable leaders was Bob Gibson, PE, who served as President and CEO for 15 years and left a lasting mark not just on our firm, but on the entire architecture and engineering community.

In 1985, he stepped into the role of President and CEO. Over the next 15 years, Bob guided Clark Nexsen through incredible growth, helping us expand our footprint both in the U.S. and internationally.

One of his boldest moves? Opening a branch office in Madrid, Spain — not exactly customary practice for a regional Virginia firm at the time. But that was Bob — always thinking big, always looking for ways to push the boundaries while staying true to our values. I was fortunate to work in the Madrid office from 1984 to 1988. It changed my life forever.

Bob was not the kind of leader who sat behind a closed door. He walked the halls, asked questions, and took a genuine interest in the people around him. He wanted everyone at Clark Nexsen — whether they had been there for decades or had just walked in the door — to feel like they were part of something meaningful. He knew every employee by name, and many times knew their spouses and children too. It was during his tenure that Clark Nexsen was introduced to Myers-Briggs and Bob made it an important part of our culture.

He believed in doing the right thing, even when it was hard. And that integrity was not just something people respected — they loved him for it. Bob expected a lot but he gave even more in return: mentorship, opportunities, support, and a whole lot of wisdom.

Bob's impact went far beyond the walls of our offices. He served as President of the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) and chaired the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS),

always advocating for better design standards, stronger ethics, and more support for young engineers entering the field.

When Bob retired in 2000, I was honored to be selected to follow him as President of Clark Nexsen. These were big shoes to fill. I was the first structural engineer Bob hired at Clark Nexsen, in 1993. I had spent years learning alongside Bob and shared his passion for both technical excellence and service to the profession.

It is no exaggeration to say that the culture of mentorship and leadership at Clark Nexsen today exists because of Bob. His fingerprints are everywhere in how we support our colleagues, in how we show up for our clients, and in how we think about the future of design and engineering.

When people talk about Bob, they do not just talk about awards or titles (though he had plenty of those). They talk about the way he made people feel supported, challenged, and valued. They talk about his sense of humor, his endless curiosity, and his unwavering belief that great design comes from great teams.

Bob Gibson was more than a CEO — he was my mentor, a friend, and a true champion for what this profession can be when it is led with heart.

Rest easy, Bob. Your impact will be felt for generations to come, and I can't thank you enough for the years of mentorship and support. You changed my life.

Chris Stone, PE, F.NSPE, F.ASCE

Chris Stone - March 01, 2025 at 04:31 PM

TW

“ Tom and Nancy Winborne purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Robert C. Gibson.



Tom and Nancy Winborne - February 25, 2025 at 05:45 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Robert C. Gibson.

February 24, 2025 at 05:25 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Robert C. Gibson.



February 24, 2025 at 05:25 PM



“ Sacred Duty Spray was purchased for the family of Robert C. Gibson.



February 24, 2025 at 01:48 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Robert C. Gibson.

February 24, 2025 at 01:48 PM



“ Days of Sunshine Bouquet was purchased for the family of Robert C. Gibson.



February 24, 2025 at 11:24 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Robert C. Gibson.

February 24, 2025 at 11:24 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Robert C. Gibson.

February 23, 2025 at 10:03 AM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Robert C. Gibson.



February 23, 2025 at 10:03 AM

JG

“ My uncle Bob and his family are a permanent part of my childhood memories in particular a marvelous trip to Disney World in Dec 1974! Several summer trips to the NSPE meeting, which was the highlight of our summer. He was my Dads (Louis Guy) closest and dearest friend for over 65 years. I will always remember him as my cool Uncle Bob who was serious and fun combined which is just one of his many obvious accomplishments. I hope to pay my respects in person on Friday the 28th. Love, Jim Guy

Jim Guy - February 22, 2025 at 09:29 AM



Love this Jim! Hope you can make it!

Katherine Gibson - February 22, 2025 at 11:10 AM

JL

Jim, your dad was a dear friend to all my family. I was his date to his high school prom!! Looking forward to seeing you on Friday. Joan Gibson Lippold

JOAN LIPPOLD - February 23, 2025 at 11:42 AM

KR

“ Bob was a fine man and respected colleague.
Ken Rigsbee, PE retired, F NSPE, Spicewood, Texas

Ken Rigsbee - February 22, 2025 at 08:55 AM

SI

“ I'm so very sorry to hear of Bob's passing. 😞 He was a dear man. He and my Dad were close friends. My Dad always looked forward to Thursday mornings with "The East End Gang" in Woods Edge. Bob was such a great support to him during my Mom's health struggles and when she passed. He always warmly welcomed us both to a "happy hour" whenever I was in town visiting Dad. He will be missed. 💔 My prayers are with you all. 🙏

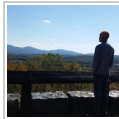
Sharon Irvin - February 22, 2025 at 08:49 AM

MS

“ Bob was always a champion for children. He will be missed.

Martha Ann & Charlie Stallings

Martha Ann Stallings - February 21, 2025 at 06:55 PM



When I joined Clark Nexsen fresh out of college, I was so nervous. My first 'real' career job. Bob was so welcoming. He made this big Architectural and Engineering firm feel like one big family. It always amazed me how he would walk around the office just to chat and check on his staff. When he greeted you, he asked how your significant other was by name and your children by name. He truly cared about the people that worked for him. He was the reason I devoted 18 years to that firm. He changed my life in so many ways. I will truly miss him.

Mark Hinckley - February 21, 2025 at 09:04 PM

BG

Although I first started with Clark Nexsen Owen Barbieri & Gibson (CNOBG) in 1967 in the Lynchburg office while I was a freshman at VA Tech, I didn't meet Bob until 1989, when my small architectural firm in Charlotte asked CNOBG to join our team and bring its engineering prowess to help us win a large project at a NC state university we were pursuing. We won the project, the relationship strengthened over coming years, and Bob convinced his partners in Norfolk to absorb our small architectural practice in the then-60 person CNOBG in 1993. We were together as one firm in 1994, the firm soon shortened its name to Clark Nexsen, and grew to 10 offices with over 400 people nationwide. He was the reason I devoted the remaining 26 years of my professional career to the firm, and he remained not only a close friend, but a mentor whose guidance over the years helped me and my family grow not just professionally, but personally. My wife and I saw him last fall, and he was jovial as always, We love you, Bob.

Carol and Bob Gunn

Bob Gunn - February 22, 2025 at 07:41 AM