

## Gilbert's biography

Gilbert knew he wanted to write for a living at the age of 12. An avid reader of [The Adventures of Tintin](#), Gilbert also dreamed of – in the words of Georges Rémi (a.k.a. Hergé) – “sketching out the spirit of the times”. Launching into reporting at Montréal’s McGill University when 90.3 CKUT turned into an FM station in 1987, Gilbert put himself through McGill University (BA Sociology, minor in Ancient Greek and Roman History) during the summer by working the night shift in a St-Boniface abattoir. Then by day, he spent his time reporting for the erstwhile Selkirk Enterprise & Lake Centre News. Gilbert doggedness earned him McGill’s [Mathias Bielski Prize](#) upon graduation in 1988 for his 150-page paper on Aboriginal self-determination.

This and his experience writing for the McGill Daily and McGill Tribune assembled a broad enough portfolio for Gilbert to land himself a scholarship to attend the Joseph Pulitzer-founded [Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism](#). While in New York City, Gilbert wrote for the graduate school weekly [The Bronx Beat](#) when he secured a one-on-one interview with then-Mayor Ed Koch on zoning regulations. This informed an article he was researching on absentee landlords for his Investigative Reporting course. Gilbert also covered the United Nations and the *Canadiens de Montréal* NHL team as a freelancer for the start up *Montréal Daily News* during his Masters studies.

Offered a staff job as a crime reporter at the *Montréal Daily News* upon graduation, Gilbert returned to the fourth largest French-speaking city in the world where he went on to cover 50 homicides. Among those was the École Polytechnique tragedy which happened a week before the *Daily News* was shuttered in December 1989 (in a period of consolidation of the news media).

Attempts to leap into foreign correspondence immediately after the *Daily News* closure saw Gilbert spend a month in Hong Kong trying out with AFP and Reuters as well as the South China Morning Post and the Hong Kong Standard. The realities of the 1990 global recession, oil price shock and drop in defence spending in the aftermath of the Cold War prevailed. He was competing against a great many seasoned reporters, who had also been recently laid off or seen their newspapers shut down. Back in Canada, Gilbert bussed across the country three times and applied to more than 100 daily newspapers. Persistence paid off and the [Kingston Whig Standard](#) hired him to write for their Sunday magazine. An article the *Whig* published on DIY home sales, however, cut deeply into advertising revenue and just as the editor was explaining they couldn’t keep him, the [Edmonton Sun](#) came calling.

There, Gilbert wrote an investigative series about Wilson Nepoose, a Samson Cree man who was later exonerated from the murder of [Marie Rose Desjarlais](#), which he did not commit. Shortly after the Alberta Attorney General’s office ordered the case reopened, the sister newspaper in Ottawa asked Gilbert to move to the Canadian capital as they needed a bilingual crime reporter.

In Ottawa, Gilbert covered another two dozen homicides, including a series of underworld contract murders that were the subject of the police’s [Project Octopus](#). He also covered a serial bank robber who turned out to be infamous prison-break artist and bank robber Roger “Mad Dog” Caron, author of [Go-Boy! Memories of a Life Behind Bars](#) (for which Caron earned the 1978 Governor General’s award). Gilbert’s nationally leading coverage led to an incognito interview with Caron’s former cellmate who asked Gilbert to broker a meeting with local police and RCMP so he could turn Crown witness in Caron’s defense against his former cellmate’s narcotics suppliers – Caron was beginning to suffer an early onset of Parkinson’s Disease due to beatings sustained in penitentiaries. On his return to Canada, Gilbert

approached Caron about writing this story but his dementia and Parkinson's Disease were too far advanced to have a lengthy conversation. All told, the number of deaths by homicide he covered reached 88 – not counting other tragedies like motor vehicle accidents and crafty frauds.

Local Ottawa CTV affiliate CJOH asked Gilbert to join the regional-ratings leading TV station to cover the Project Octopus trials, among other files. Then Société Radio-Canada (the French-language side of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) in Winnipeg hired Gilbert to cover City Hall and tasked him with investigating allegations of a priest accused of sexually abusing choirboys in rural Manitoba. CBC Manitoba then hired him to cover City Hall until Reuters, the world's largest multimedia news provider, hired him to open the Winnipeg bureau in 1995.

From the open-outcry trading pits of the Winnipeg Commodities Exchange to the global grain forecasting room of the Canadian Wheat Board, once-in-a-century flooding in 1997 Manitoba and a feature trip to the polar bear capital of the world (Churchill, Manitoba), there were plenty of stories to put this part of the world back on the international news map.

Gilbert's next assignment in Toronto had him reporting on the Toronto Stock Exchange, successfully launching Reuters' French-language domestic service and even reviewing movies for the general news file. Within a year, in May 1999 – a decade after his initial attempt to become a foreign correspondent – Gilbert was in Buenos Aires covering the Southern Cone of South America for Reuters.

The next 3-1/2 years saw him cover the (before he was elected President) Evo Morales-led coca growers' siege of La Paz, Bolivia, interview a former dictatorship-era gubernatorial candidate in northwestern Argentina who invited him to ask any question he wanted (after placing a loaded handgun on his desk), and a 2-1/2 hour interview with then-Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

From the collapse of Argentina's economy into the barter age to the geoglyphs of Southern Peru's Nazca Desert, Gilbert has interviewed shoeshine boys elected President of the Republic and deadly riots hastening the end of an administration with the leader scrambling onto the presidential palace's rooftop to escape by helicopter.

Covering the grueling and dangerous work out on fields of sugar cane to mixing cachaça in his caipirinhas on Ipanema, he listened to Wall Street bond traders placing Christmas bonus bets on the destiny of nations. Gilbert (in addition to having started learning Spanish at 12 years of age) started studying Portuguese as his coverage of the Mercosur trade bloc intensified and brought him to Brazil frequently – yielding his first book in November 2001: [\*The New New World, the re-emerging markets of South America\*](#), favourably reviewed by a future Governor of the Bank of Canada.

Gilbert went on to cover the Group of 20 finance ministers and central bank governors for Reuters in Australia, Canada, France, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, the UK, and the United States until Reuters' acquisition by Thomson in April 2007. By then, he had reported out of 15 countries and ended his journalism career in Washington, DC, covering everything from the White House to the World Bank.

Gilbert then moved into the communications sector of Canada's federal government, serving in a variety of portfolios (Departments of Industry, Foreign Affairs (the 2010 G8 and G20 Summits), Treasury Board Secretariat, Finance, Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, and now the Privy Council Office). In that time, he has written speeches for two Canadian Prime Ministers and was selected among a handful of civilian public servants to study Russian hybrid warfare with two dozen Canadian and

foreign senior military officers for a year, including field trips to Estonia, Poland, and NATO headquarters in Brussels. Gilbert currently gives advice on national security, public safety, and foreign relations to the PM's staff.

In his "off" hours, Gilbert has written and published seven books (nonfiction, children's stories, and historical fiction).