**Obituary**

**Gil Bridges**

There are no words to fully express the loss of our family patriarch, Gil Bridges. Gil was born to Leonard and Susie Bridges on July 14, 1941 in Detroit, Michigan. He was eighty years old when he passed away on December 8, 2021. His wife and daughters were by his side.

Gil’s legacy began early in his childhood when his sister Marlene suggested he play the saxophone. This moment in time sparked what would become a long, successful career in the world of music as the legendary front man and proprietor of his band, Rare Earth. Gil began his musical journey playing the saxophone for the entire school at his grade school graduation. He went on to play in the marching band for Mumford High School where his music teacher selected students to form a band of which Gil was one of those chosen. He said this was the beginning of his thoughts of playing in a band.

During his high school years, Gil was asked to join a band called the Glo-Worms, but Gil told them he would not join a band called the Glo-Worms. At the time Gil drove a 1956 Ford Sunliner convertible. He suggested the band be called The Sunliners, after his car. The boys agreed. During the 1960s, The Sunliners made quite the name for themselves around the Detroit music scene, and it wasn’t long before word spread and they were being booked into venues spanning all the way to the East Coast. They were asked to play many well-known places like the Peppermint Lounge in New York City. Shortly afterward the band decided to change their name to Rare Earth.

In 1969, Motown Records signed Rare Earth, and placed them on a new subsidiary label named specifically after them. Although they were not the first all-white group to be signed to Motown, they were its first all-white rock band. This ushered in an entirely new musical era for the label. Gil was a hard-working musician who enjoyed performing live on stage and writing jazz music in his home studio. Motown Museum remembers him as a trailblazer during an era of major cultural change.

In the 1970s, Rare Earth climbed the charts and sold hit after hit, such as; “I know I’m Losing You,” “I Just Want to Celebrate,” “Tobacco Road,” “Hey, Big Brother,” and “Get Ready” – a groundbreaking, 21-minute jam session whose radio version rose to number 4 on the Billboard Hot 100. Rare Earth earned two certified-gold albums, one certified-platinum album and continued to sell millions of records worldwide.

Gil was the only original band member beginning with the Sunliners and throughout all of the years of Rare Earth who played on every song recorded. With various members throughout the years, Gil kept Rare Earth recording, jamming, and playing massive venues to sold out crowds around the world. The band played at venues such as Madison Square Gardens and legendary festivals like the California Jam and the Atlanta Pop Festival. Rare Earth shared the stage with a multitude of performers who were the all-time greatest rock bands of the 60s and 70s, such as Grand Funk Railroad, Jimi Hendrix and Fleetwood Mac. They played on famous TV shows like Rock Concert, Midnight Special, and The Ed Sullivan Show. Rare Earth continued touring and selling out venues until the pandemic hit in 2020. To this day, his songs are still used in countless movies and video games.

Gil loved his fans and was particularly proud of a special veteran fan who gave him his medal which he had earned in Vietnam. The veterans always told Gil that Rare Earth’s “Get Ready,” “cause here we come” was the chant they shouted as they rushed from their foxholes into battle.

Gil was a man of many talents. He took flying lessons in high school and went on to became a licensed pilot and later owned his own private airplanes. Boating was his favorite pastime and he loved driving his Jaguar. He was also working on his memoir entitled; Rare Earth—the Real Story before his passing.

Gil always thanked the Lord for having such a beautiful life, and for being able to do the work he loved as a musician. He particularly loved it when his family came to his concerts. He always said, “it’s all about God and family.” His beautiful voice and the superb sound of his crooning saxophone is certainly playing with the angels in heaven for the Lord.

Gil is survived by: his wife ***Johnnie Sue Bridges***, his biological daughter, Delaney Bliss Geisner, (Danny), his daughters, Stella Monique King, Jessica Jean Brooks, Renee Angela Gilbert (Matthew), and Cheryl Giefer (Sebastian).  Grandchildren: Gabriel, Issac, Allysa, Jordan, Joshua, Nikolai, Taiana, Avery, Owen, Adam, Blake, and Layla. Great grandchildren: Naia and Dominic, his sister, Marlene Dickson, and several nieces and nephews whom he loved.  He also leaves a host of extended family and people who were closely considered family.

Pastor David Ferraro will be officiating the services on December 18, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. at the Merriman Baptist Church, 2055 Merriman Road, Garden City, Michigan 48135.