Stephen Goltra Gilbert was born in Portland, Oregon. As a child, he was mesmerized by animated cartoons, and his parents encouraged his artistic nature and his love of the natural world. While at boarding school in Andover, Massachusetts, Steve discovered musical theatre and opera. He then attended Reed College where he earned a degree in art, and was introduced by a colleague to the work of Frank Netter, which fascinated him.

During a three-year stint in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, he applied to study medical illustration under Muriel McLatchie Miller (a former student of Max Brödel) at Massachusetts General Hospital, which he started after his military discharge. After three years of executing drawing after drawing of human anatomy, Steve received his first commission from a surgeon in Tacoma, Washington, who arranged for Steve to receive additional training from Ralph Sweet in San Francisco. Steve was grateful for the two months he spent with Sweet and learned a great deal, but his frustration with institutional illustration work led him to leave employment with the University of Washington’s School of Medicine and return to the family farm in Oregon, where he spent the next twelve years writing and illustrating his greatest body of work: six dissection guides for zoology (necturus, frog and comparative anatomy; also fetal pig, cat and dogfish, which are still in print) based on his own research and dissections.

In 1973, Steve was invited to Toronto, where he was offered a position to teach part-time applied art courses in the Art as Applied to Medicine Department in the Faculty of Medicine. Over his twenty-three year career at U of T, he attained the title of full professor and instructed over one hundred AAM and BMC students. He also authored “Pictorial Human Embryology” (1989) and “Outline of Cat Anatomy With Reference to the Human” (2000). He was the recipient of many AMI and teaching awards, and was invited to Japan on multiple occasions to train young illustrators there.

Steve never completely retired; he continued to work on an anatomy book with Dr. Anne Agur at the University of Toronto and completed a pictorial history of embryology, which is still awaiting a publisher. He will also be remembered as a tattoo artist and historian, who authored many articles and a book on the history of tattoos. Many of his friends, former students and family members carry their own indelible, permanent reminder of Steve’s legacy with them. His beautiful tone and pen & ink illustrations, his gentle and caring nature, and his great passion for art, science and truth will always inspire us to be better illustrators, teachers, and human beings.

Steve Gilbert (1931-2014) passed away in his sleep on February 20, 2014.