

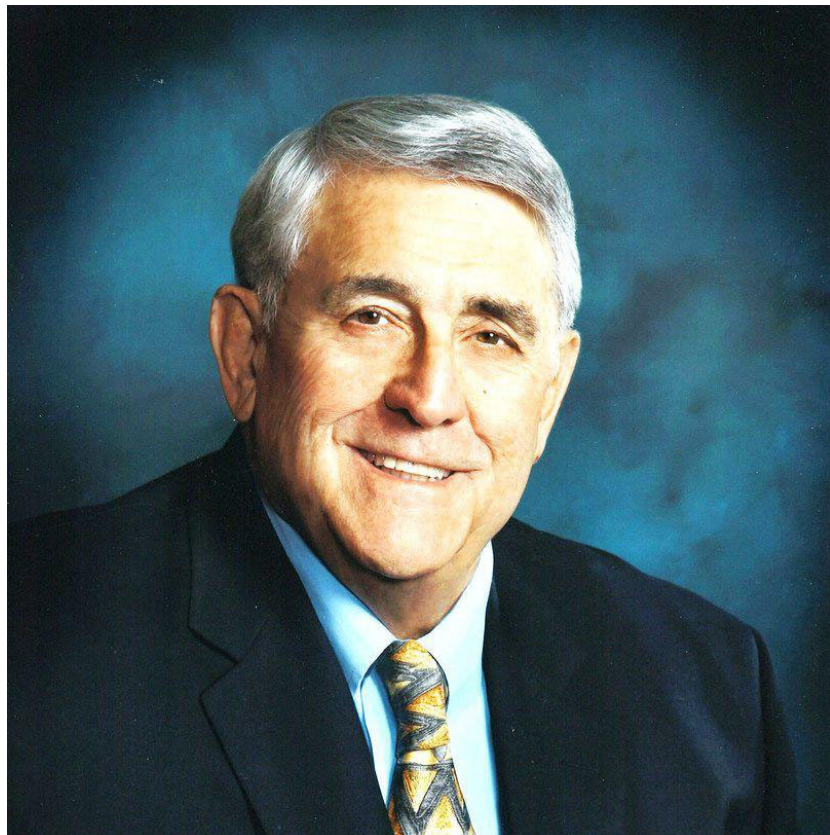


SUBSCRIBE NOW \$1 for 3 months

NEWS > OBITUARIES

Bob Gould, longtime Athens civic leader and insurance man, dies at 79

Gould's wife, Peggy, is part of a family line that includes John F. Lubben and son Joe A. Lubben, longtime Dallas Morning News leaders and executives who between them spent more than a century with the newspaper.





The Dallas Morning News

[Sign In](#)

SUBSCRIBE NOW \$1 for 3 months



By [Marc Ramirez](#)

1:56 PM on Feb 23, 2019



Listen to this article now

10 10 1.0x

Powered by **Trinity Audio**

00:00

05:52

On certain mornings in the Henderson County town of Athens, you could find the menfolk slurping coffee outside Robinson's Drug Store downtown, and there was Bob Gould, planted in the middle of the klatch.

Not because he liked being the center of attention, mind you. He just liked knowing what was going on.

Robert "Bob" Gould died Thursday in Athens. He was 79.

Services are set for 10:30 a.m. Thursday at St. Matthias Episcopal Church, 205 Willowbrook Drive in Athens.

Gould loved Athens, population 12,300. He was born there in 1939 to insurance man Jake Gould and his wife, Mary Jane, and he wanted to see it prosper.

Even as he took over his dad's business, he dedicated himself to that civic notion with warmth and humor, an even-keeled, down-to-earth man who made those around him feel valued.

"Bob was always involved with whoever he was talking to," said Peggy Gould, his wife of 55 years. "He just thought everybody was good, and he wanted them to have a good time and get to know him."

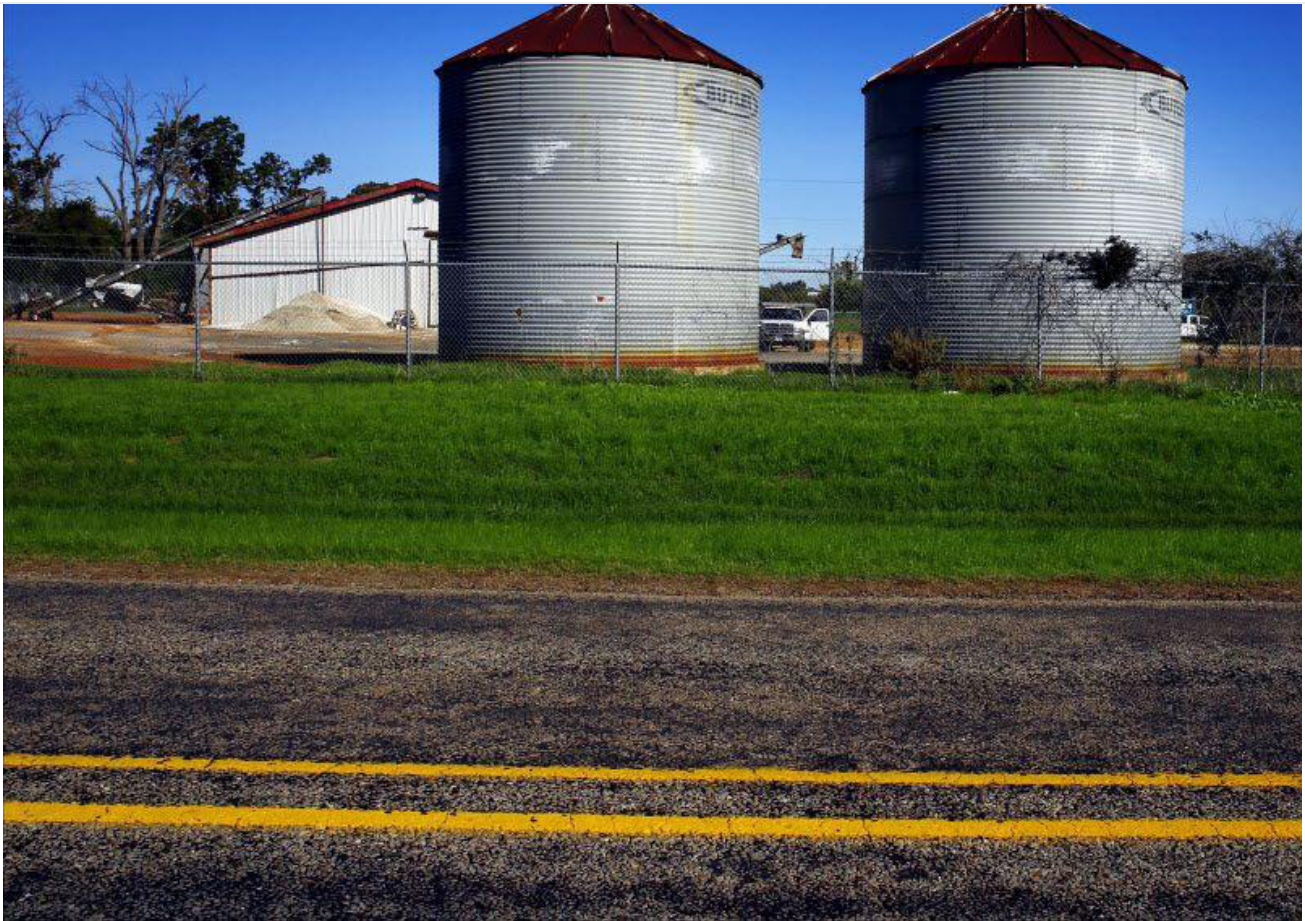
...



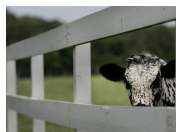
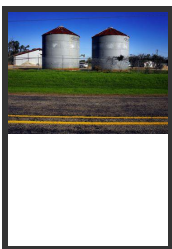
The Dallas Morning News

Sign In

SUBSCRIBE NOW \$1 for 3 months



[1/3] Silos stand on the property of El Dorado Agricultural Products in Athens. (File photo)



Gould graduated from Athens High, attending Tarleton State University and then the Hartford School of Insurance. During a four-year Navy stint, from 1958 to 1962, he served aboard the U.S.S. Coral Sea, amid the Laotian Civil War.



SUBSCRIBE NOW \$1 for 3 months

Bob was his name, and he'd just started working at his dad's insurance business. Peggy and Bob jitterbugged until the music shut down and got home in the wee hours of the morning.

"We pretty much clicked," Peggy said. They married less than a year later, after which she did in fact move to Athens.

"Here I was, a terrified Dallasite, wondering what on earth I was going to do in this little hick town," said Peggy, whose grandfather, John F. Lubben, had been the business partner of George Dealey, longtime publisher of *The Dallas Morning News* and owner of the A. H. Belo Corp. Her father, Joseph A. Lubben, would retire as the newspaper's executive vice president.

"But within a week, you couldn't have blasted me out of there with a stick of dynamite," she said.



Robert "Bob" Gould, in a photo taken in Athens in 1967 (Courtesy of Gould Family)

The same went for Bob, a decades-long member of St. Matthias Episcopal Church who involved himself in everything from Rotary Club and YMCA to the City Council, on which he also served as mayor pro tem.

On Labor Day weekend, he and Peggy would hand out roadside coffee for the Jaycees, an organization to which he belonged for 14 years while earning dozens of achievement awards. He also

served on several boards of directors, including the Athens Economic



The Dallas Morning News

[Sign In](#)

SUBSCRIBE NOW \$1 for 3 months

as a council member. "Growing up in Athens, I always had an interest in the people and the growth."

His proudest achievement, though, was the completion of the State Highway Loop 7 around Athens. It was a project to which he devoted 27 years, with five drawers of a file cabinet full of documents and correspondence he'd amassed as a member of the planning board.

"He was a civic leader in the best sense of the word," said Robert Decherd, CEO of *The News*. "He was forthcoming, good-spirited and always interested in what other people were thinking and doing. And that's a pretty great combination."

Through it all, Gould made time for his family, who learned to share him with a community that had grown to cherish him for his civic commitment and easygoing nature.



Robert "Bob" Gould in a photo taken in 2015 (EA Photography / Courtesy of Gould Family)

"It was a normal thing growing up, that that's the way you're supposed to be," said Gould's daughter Meg, the youngest of his four children, who now works for VisitDallas. "When I moved away to L.A., I felt the loss of that community. And when I moved back, knowing that I could walk in somewhere and they'd know I was a Gould — well, that makes me very proud."

Meg recalled childhood time spent on the family farm, riding horses, fishing, feeding the animals, her dad teaching her how to drive. While girls weren't



SUBSCRIBE NOW \$1 for 3 months

In more recent years, "Daddy Bob" spent weekends at the family lake house on Lake Athens, whipping up pancakes and grits for his seven grandchildren and listening to Willie Nelson. He retired as owner and president of Gould Insurance Agency in 2005.

Even when he fell seriously ill, he worried more about his wife than about himself, cracking up hospital staff with clever one-liners every time he came through the door.

When he was finally gone, his loss shook Athens, drawing a revolving door of mourners to the Gould household.

"The grocery boy here cried on my shoulder today," Peggy said Friday. "He said to me, 'Oh my, we're gonna miss him.'"

In addition to his wife, twin daughters and grandchildren, Gould is survived by two sons, Robert Gould Jr. of Athens and Joseph of Dallas; brother Harry "Peter" Gould of Zurich, Switzerland; and one great-grandchild.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial contributions be made to St. Matthias or to a charity of the donor's choice.



Marc Ramirez. Marc Ramirez is a Dallas-based lifestyles journalist and food and drink enthusiast who would rather think about what's for lunch than anything on his to-do list.

[✉ typewriterninja@gmail.com](mailto:typewriterninja@gmail.com) [f /MarcRamirez.Journalist](https://www.facebook.com/MarcRamirez.Journalist) [t @typewriterninja](https://twitter.com/typewriterninja)