



B. Ray Owen

January 16, 2015

B. Ray Owen of Cape Girardeau, died Friday, January 16 after a month-long battle with pneumonia beset with complications. Visitation will be from 4 to 6 p.m. on Tuesday at Ford and Sons Mount Auburn Chapel. A celebration of the life and times of B. Ray Owen will later be held with the coming of spring and the promise of new beginnings. Ray is survived by his wife and life partner Sally; a son, Dr. Stephen Owen of Christiansburg, Va; a brother, Calvin Owen of Saltillo, MS; a sister, Sue Aldridge of Newyago, MI; nieces and nephews; and felines Annie and Peaches, who spiritedly competed for lap time while he worked at his computer. In honor of Ray's life, memorials may be made to the Humane Society of Southeast Missouri, the Humane Society of the United States or Mid-America Teen Challenge. Ray was born on August 21 (he subscribed to the theory that age is a number and his was unlisted) near Dyersburg, TN, son of Charles Edward and Bernice Owen. Following the untimely death of his mother a short time later, Ray was sent to be raised by his hard-working, loving grandparents, Liston and Laura Owen, who lived by the words of the Bible and found it disconcerting that Ray's maternal grandfather spent his fair share of time in Tennessee county jails for making what was rumored to be some mighty fine moonshine. Ray was a hard scrabble farm kid, unafraid of hard work and always looking for an opportunity to learn something new. A highlight of childhood in southern Illinois was going into town to purchase store bought white bread and bologna when the family budget allowed. He still considered a bologna sandwich slathered with

mayo a treat. To earn money to buy his first car, which came mostly in crates, Ray picked up copious amounts of walnuts. The price of the car was a princely sum of \$150. A self-taught shade tree mechanic, he got the car in running order and drove it thousands of miles without incidence. Ray graduated from Mounds Township High School and at the age of 17 joined the Army, where he spent time as a cartographer and playing on Army basketball teams. B. Ray factoid #1: To many, Ray's first name remained (with the exception of the U.S. government and the military), a well-kept secret. Suffice it to say that Ray had a particular fondness for the Johnny Cash song, "A Boy Named Sue." After serving in the Army, Ray returned to southern Illinois, where he managed a Cairo movie theater, doing everything from taking tickets to running the often cranky projector. A hidden talent that opened the door to a lengthy career in journalism was his inherent gift of writing. His style was crisp, often laced with a just the right amount of humor. The Cairo Evening Citizen, then a daily, signed him on as a sportswriter/jack of all trades, including running a lengthy daily delivery route through the winding hills of southern Illinois. He worked his way through the ranks to become sports editor and then editor, covering the Cairo riots of the mid-1960s, dodging bricks and bullets to get accurate, riveting reports of the civil unrest that was to profoundly affect Cairo in years to come. When JFK was assassinated one November day in 1963, Ray heard the news at the local laundromat and rushed back to (what journalism veterans will recall) "stop the presses." The breaking coverage of the assassination earned Ray and the Daily Citizen a state award. Ray took classes at SIU in business and journalism. During his tenure as editor at the Citizen, he worked with SIU to establish a southern Illinois high school journalism program. Ray unwittingly met his someday wife Sally at a Goldwater for President Rally on the grounds of Cairo High School. As distributor of press passes to professional journalists and groups of students allowed to cover the event, one of those passes was given to the high school girl in a green coat, an official representative of the Central High School Tiger. It would be some years later when they would meet again, this

time in the Newsroom of the Southeast Missourian, where Ray had signed on as Sports Editor. Newbie Sally was fascinated with the guy who hung his foot over the desk as he purposefully pounded out one story after another in record time. Ray wooed Sally not with sweet nothings but with funny and endearing stories of dogs who had shared his life. During his 35 years at the Southeast Missourian, Ray produced award-winning sports news, later becoming City Editor and the self-appointed guru of those new things called computers that turned carbon paper and white out into trade relics. The final portion of his newspaper career was spent as Business Editor, and again he produced award winning stories and page layouts. He often commented that the days of linotype machines, the ability to read copy upside down and catch typos and the urgent ♡bells♡ of the AP ticker tape announcing breaking news were ♡what kept the ink in his blood flowing.♡ The purchase at auction of a box of old movie magazines from the 1930s and 40s opened a new avenue for Ray. He studied and became highly knowledgeable about vintage books, magazines and paper ephemera of all sorts. For many years, Ray maintained a booth in local antiques malls, currently at Pastimes Antiques in downtown Cape. He was kind enough to name Sally Vice President of Cookbooks, joking that she loved to gather cookbooks - to read. Ray did not need cookbooks to turn out his signature meals, country fried steak with homemade gravy, real mashed potatoes and from scratch chicken and dumplings. By far, the greatest source of pride for Ray was his son, Stephen. Of the many Missouri Press Association awards and honors Ray received during his career, the greatest and most meaningful, was ♡Dad of the Year,♡ an essay contest sponsored by West Park Mall. Nine-year-old Stephen's essay was simple and mirrored Ray's philosophy of life. ♡My Dad is the bestest because he never says you've got to win, he says try your best and you will always be a winner.♡ And though he never bragged (it's an Irish thing), Stephen's successes through school and later as a professor of Criminal Justice at Radford University filled his heart with pride. B. Ray factoid

#2: As a young man, Ray was a certified Arthur Murray Dance Instructor. Ray, through osmosis, acquired Sally's love for New Orleans. They traveled there once a year, giving Ray time to savor rich Chicory coffee at the Caf du Monde while reading the (then) daily Times Picayune. Later he spent hours plowing through French Quarter bookstores smelling of old paper and governed by the bookstore tabby in residence, always on the lookout for hidden treasure. Ray patiently lived with a succession of abandoned/shelter pets, bonding with all but one. That was Big Fellow, Sally's college cat, a large orange tabby with a penchant to annoy males, particularly Ray. Big Fellow regularly hid around corners, seizing an opportune moment to pounce on Ray's (hopefully) bare feet. Still, when Big Fellow used the last of his nine lives and went to Cat Heaven (though we are far from sure), Ray was the one to provide a suitable grave and homemade marker. Ray's life can be summed up with one sentence. He was a kind, decent, patient man with big, strong hands and a bigger heart. Although Ray's coverage of the final quarter of a close football game could have the qualities of a written symphony, he was not one to compose long notes on anniversary cards. The same thought appeared year after year - It's been a great run. It was indeed. Online condolences may be made at www.fordandsonsfuneralhome.com. Ford & Sons Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

Tribute Wall

LF

“ *Sally, my thought and prayers are with you in this time of your loss!*

Linda Fulton - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

ER

“ *Sally, I'm so sorry to hear of Ray's passing. He was a wonderful man and I enjoyed the time I spent working with him as a fellow journalist. My thoughts are with you. With love, EJ*

E.J. Rotert - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

TS

“ *I am saddened to see that one of the really goog guys has moved on. :0(*

Tom Sawyer - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

GR

“ *B. Ray Owen*

Gary rust - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ *Sally, I was so sorry to hear about Ray's passing. We all were hoping and praying he would fully recover. My heart felt sympathy to you and Steve.*

Beverly Burke - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

MH

“ Bill and I send our condolences to you and your family and something from Faure's Requiem: Into paradise may angels draw them, on your arrival, may the martyrs receive you and lead you to the Holy City Jerusalem May the chorus of angels receive you, and with Lazarus, once a beggar, may you have eternal rest.”

Margaret Hrezo - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ Sally, Always loved and admired Ray's writing, but after reading your wonderful description of his personality and life - I wish we had been friends. My sincere condolences, Brad Brune

Brad Brune - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

SS

“ May memories and old laughter help fill the void. My heart goes out to you.

Shari Stiver - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

NH

“ Steve: Your father sounds like a wonderful man who lived a full and beautiful life. My thoughts are with you and your family during this difficult time.

Nicole Hendrix - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

SM

“ Steve----such a beautiful and affirming tribute. It could have only been written about a truly great human being. Clearly, that was your dad.

Sam Minner - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JC

“ Steve - You and your family remain in my thoughts and prayers. What a joy it was to read your dad's obituary. What an extraordinary man he was. It is easy to see where you get your love of sports and your ability to write. Godspeed.

Jack Call - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

GL

“ Ray Owen was without a doubt one of the finest men I've ever met and I'm happy to say I had the opportunity to know him. Steve, I'm with you and thinking about you in this time. God Bless.

Greg Lincoln - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

AP

“ Thoughts and prayers with the family.

Andrea Pavone - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

KM

“ Sending love to you in the loss of such a great husband, father and man. Your words painted a beautiful picture of your life together. Thank you.

Kathi Mazzanti - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

PF

“ Ray was a great neighbor and an even better man. He will be missed by all.

Pat LaFont & Family - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JY

“ *Sally, this is the most wonderful tribute I've ever read -- just filled with love. It has me in tears. You have been on my mind all weekend. I will call, but I want to give you some time, as I know you are torn in a thousand different directions right now. I was so lucky to work with Ray, and even luckier to count him (and you) among my friends. No words are adequate at this time...hugs and love, Jane. Joe sends his condolences as well.*

Jane Young - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

CW

“ *Ray was a great a great journalist, but more importantly, a great guy. We used to talk a lot about fishing, but our favorite subject was winning first place in the 1976 Bicentennial Games Egg Toss Championship. We are very sorry for your loss.*

Charles & Judy Wiles - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

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Charles & Judy Wiles - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

LK

“ B. Ray's obituary is so beautifully written, and truly creates an image of a man that anyone would embrace with open arms. His life was filled with interesting and challenging events that sculpted his fine character. I never got to know him outside of a brief introduction/handshake at a few social encounters, but knowing Sally, I knew that he was a person of high integrity. Thank you for sharing this wonderful insight into the world behind the man. Our donation in his honor will definitely find its way to the Humane Society, in keeping with his kind, gentle, and very humane spirit. May his legacy provide Sally and his son, comfort in the days ahead. I know he will be sorely missed. Fondly, Lori Ann

Lori Ann Kinder - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JR

“ Huge loss for so many in Cape...Ray was such a gentleman...face literally lit up when speaking about son...so proud of him...Ray and Sally so perfect for each other....he will be missed.

Jo Rodgers - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

MS

“ Sally, my heartfelt sympathy to you and your family. What a great guy Ray was. I enjoyed the many conversations we had over comic books and Cape stuff. He was a true Cape icon.

Mary barks Stucker - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

PH

“ Sally, my thoughts and prayers are with you at this time of loss. I always loved reading articles written by Ray. The tribute is wonderfully written and shares his life so well. May your memories carry you through the days ahead. So glad you have Stephen to help you through.

Phyllis Crites Hansen - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

PH

“ *What a beautiful tribute to a life well-lived! Sally and Stephen, you are in my thoughts and prayers. --Always a B. Ray Owen reader and fan, Pat*

Pat Heckert - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM