



Joe Blackwell

August 28, 2014

Joe Blackwell, a jazz musician, newspaper printer and likeable grouch, died Thursday, Aug. 28, 2014, at age 88 at the Missouri Veterans Home in Cape Girardeau. He was born on Nov. 26, 1925, in Blodgett Mo., the youngest child of Samuel and Alta Blackwell. He leaves behind his wife, Pat; daughter Sally Bethea and her husband Doug of Cincinnati; son Scott of Cape Girardeau; son Sam and his wife Dr. Danna Cotner of Cape Girardeau; grandson Kyle Bethea of Chicago; and granddaughters Casey Blackwell of Denver, Carly Bethea of Cincinnati and Kim Bethea of Dayton, Ohio. His brothers Earl and Paul and sister Jane died before him. His father was a watermelon farmer who died when Joe was 14. Joe and other family members lived for awhile with an aunt in Blodgett before Joe moved to Cape Girardeau to find work. As a teenager he took a job in a slaughterhouse and played drums in a band to help out his mother. Joe taught himself everything he knew how to do. As an 17-year-old Navy recruit early in World War II he was assigned to work in the USS Maryland's munitions area. He decided that was a job with a limited future, so he taught himself Morse Code and soon transferred to the radio room. The USS Maryland fought in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval battle in modern history and the first use of kamikazes by the Japanese. A kamikaze plane dove into the ship during that battle, killing 31 men. Another kamikaze hit the ship later on during the Battle of Okinawa. Ten more men were killed with six reported missing. Joe also served in the Navy during the Korean War, this time working in a support position in the Great Lakes. He

asked Pat Erwin to marry him on their first date. Though he didn't care about baseball, he coached his young sons' minor league baseball team, the Bears. Though he didn't care about baseball, he sat beside his wife every night and watched her beloved Cardinals on TV. He taught himself to play the guitar and the bass, both standup and electric. He led his own combo, featuring his wife Pat as the vocalist, before both joined the Jerry Ford Orchestra and combo. They played with those groups for more than 40 years. He also played the banjo in a Dixieland band. Joe and Pat drove their son Scott to St. Louis for weekly lessons with a jazz pianist. Scott became a professional keyboard player who played with a number of bands in Nashville. He made sure Sally got to take ballet lessons. She eventually became a cheerleader. Joe loved jazz and the bond musicians have with each other. He and Pat joined other musicians to attend many concerts by other performers. The pianist Oscar Peterson invited them to his cabin to talk about music during a jazz cruise Peterson headlined. Joe worked for the Southeast Missourian for 36 years, beginning as a linotype operator and changing jobs as technology transformed the industry. He was a proud member of the new union that carried out a long strike against the newspaper. He stood on the picket line every day until the union lost and he was rehired. Joe ultimately was laid off from his job when the Southeast Missourian changed ownership. He promptly took a correspondence course and taught himself how to tune pianos. He enjoyed putting on a grumpy face and being irascible, but he was happy about being a husband, a father and grandfather. He befriended many, especially musicians and his coffee group at Hardees. "Don't be sad," he told a member of his family shortly before his death. They are sad for now and happy he was in their lives. In lieu of flowers the family asks that contributions be made to the caring people at Southeast Hospice. Visitation will be from 10 a.m. Saturday until the time of the service at Ford & Sons Mount Auburn Chapel. The service will begin at 11 a.m. with the Rev. Joe McCullough officiating. Inurnment will be at the Missouri Veterans Cemetery in Bloomfield, Mo. at a later date.

Tribute Wall

JD

“ Dear Pat, Jelly and family: I am so very sorry for your loss. Joe will forever be in your hearts, I know. His obituary was the best I've ever read - - he was married to the most wonderful woman and produced awesome children - - one in particular I am so fortunate to know. Your family is in my prayers.

Jules Dowling - June 09, 2014 at 12:00 AM