



Walter Joe "Doc" Ford

September 21, 1935 - December 28, 2025

Walter Joe "Doc" Ford, 90, of Cape Girardeau, Missouri passed away Sunday, December 28, 2025 at Chateau Girardeau.

He was born September 21, 1935 in Cape Girardeau to Walter Henry and Mary Frances Masterson Ford.

He and Iris Engram were married February 24, 1956 at Centenary Methodist Church in Cape Girardeau.

As Walter Joe once wrote, "Starting as a kid, my only goal was to be a Major Leaguer, marry Iris Engram and run the funeral home after my playing days were over".

At the age of 14 he was invited to workout with the Saint Louis Browns before a game in Old Sportsman's Park. He graduated from Cape Central High School in 1953, where he was Student Body President his Senior Year. While at Cape Central, he played baseball for four years and started three years on the basketball team. He played baseball with Cape American Legion team for four years. Three weeks out of high school he signed a pro baseball contract with Milwaukee Braves. He played four years in the Minor Leagues for Milwaukee Braves, Baltimore Orioles and Chicago Cubs. He was also inducted in the Cape Central Sports Hall of Fame and Southeast Missouri

Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame.

He attended Southeast Missouri State University and then graduated from Gupton Mortuary School in Nashville, Tennessee. On July 1, 1957 he and Iris became acting managers of Ford & Sons Funeral Home and they were later joined by his brothers, Jerry and Don. The family legacy continued as sons, Cliff and Kevin joined the business, followed by Kevin's children, Josh and Kristen. Ford & Sons later opened a location in Benton, Missouri and also purchased Brinkopf-Howell Funeral Home in Cape Girardeau. In 1985 they purchased Cape County Memorial Park Cemetery. They were also part owner of Arena Golf for many years. He served for six years as the Cape Girardeau County Coroner. He and Iris were honored by the Missouri State Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors for 50 years of service. He was also past member of Southeast Missouri National and State Funeral Directors Association and Selected Independent Funeral Homes.

Walter Joe never met a stranger. He had a remarkable memory of knowing individuals by name. He genuinely valued every family he served. Many considered him not only a professional, but a friend. He leaves a lasting impression for all who knew him.

He was the past President of Cape County Chapter of the American Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Old McKendree Methodist Church, Friends of Old St. Vincent's Church, Cape Girardeau Chamber of Commerce and Cape Girardeau Rotary Club. He was the oldest member of the Cape Girardeau Rotary Club, joining the club December 1, 1957. He served on the Board of St. Marks Masonic Lodge (50 years, 32 Degree Mason), Southeast Missouri Hospital (40 years) and past President of the hospital's foundation, Cape Jaycees (1st Vice President), Cape Girardeau County Democratic Party (20 years), Cape County Bank of Cape and Jackson. He was also a member of Elks Lodge, Eagles Lodge and Moolah Shrine. He also received the Drury

Family Spirit of Entrepreneurship Award in 2021.

He was a lifelong member of Centenary Global Methodist Church in Cape Girardeau, serving many leadership roles.

As a family man, he loved coaching his sons and their friends. He and Iris enjoyed attending their grandchildren and great-grandchildren's sporting events and other school activities.

Survivors include his loving wife of 69 years, Iris Ford of Cape Girardeau; two sons, Cliff (Michele) Ford of Ridgeland, Mississippi and Kevin (Cindy) Ford of Cape Girardeau; five grandchildren, Joshua (Julianna) Ford of Cape Girardeau, Brett (James) Lapeyre of New Orleans, Louisiana, Kristen (Brad) LaBruyere of Cape Girardeau, Sarah (Scott) McVey of Jackson, Mississippi, Mary Catherine (CJ) Lassabe of Pass Christian, Mississippi; 11 great-grandchildren, Montgomery, Fischer, Engram and Joshua Ford, Jr., Iris and Jay Lapeyre, Hampton and Ford LaBruyere, Cora and Lily McVey and Amelia Lassabe; a brother, Jerry W. (Margaret) Ford of Cape Girardeau; sister-in-law, Mary Gerlach of Cape Girardeau; and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; a brother, Donald Keith (Carolyn Ford Bock) Ford; and a brother-in-law, Paul Gerlach.

Visitation will be 10:00 am to 1:00 pm on Monday, January 5, 2026 at Centenary Global Methodist Church in Cape Girardeau.

Funeral service will follow at 1:00 pm Monday at the church with the Rev. Carl Palmer officiating.

Entombment will be at Cape County Memorial Park Mausoleum in Cape

Girardeau.

Memorial contributions may be given to Centenary Global Methodist Church, 300 N. Ellis St., Cape Girardeau, MO 63701 or Samaritan's Purse, PO Box 3000, Boone, NC 28607.

Walter Joe believed Jesus' statement in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

The Ford family would like to thank all the staff at Chateau Girardeau and Mercy Hospice for all their compassionate care.

Online condolences may be made at www.fordandsonsfuneralhome.com.

Ford & Sons Funeral Home - Mt. Auburn is in charge of arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Cape County Memorial Park Mausoleum

2315 Highway 61 N
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 5. 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM (CT)

Centenary Global Methodist Church
300 N. Ellis
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Funeral Service

JAN 5. 1:00 PM (CT)

Centenary Global Methodist Church
300 N. Ellis
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Tribute Wall

BG

“ *My condolences to the entire family, a life well lived*

Bob Glastetter

bob glastetter - January 05 at 09:02 PM

SG

“ *Walter Joe Doc Ford was a family man who had time for friends and worked hard to make Cape Girardeau a place to live, work, and raise a family. He always had time to sit and visit. He will be missed.*

Paul, Sharon, and Brevin Giebler



sharon giebler - January 05 at 06:08 PM

GB

“ *Doc always treated me as if my family were family. I know you will find peace. My best in these difficult times and my prayers tonight will go to your family. Peace Glen H Beussink family.*

glen beussink - January 05 at 03:48 PM

EM

“ Some trivia about Doc from a baseball nerd about Dod Ford, whom I never had the pleasure to meet.

1. “at the age of 14 he was invited to workout with the Saint Louis Browns before a game in Old Sportsman's Park. “ ... That would have been under the Dewitt ownership (family that owns the current St. Louis Cardinals). . Doc Ford finally got back to the franchise in 1955 with the Browns/Orioles, first assigned to Thetford Mines QE, then to Phoenix (Class C) and finally settled in Paris, TX (managed by former major league infielder Jimmy “Choppy” Adair and longtime Browns/Orioles manager Barney Lutz). He had become a free agent again in 1955 and its rare to get picked up again after that, but he did, signing with the Orioles

2. “and then graduated from Gupton Mortuary School in Nashville, Tennessee.” When I was attending law school at Vanderbilt, I had a cheap garden apartment that I didn't know, until I moved in, shared a parking lot with the back of Gupton. They would wheel cadavers in at all hours of day and night.)-:

Emmett McAuliffe - January 05 at 03:35 PM

RS

“ I had the privilege of serving on the Selected Board with "Doc" and always enjoyed his company. Some of us, including "Doc" played golf in our free hours during our Fall and Winter Board meetings. My sympathy goes out to his family. Rich Steele, Bay City, MI

Rich Steele - January 05 at 01:20 PM

KM

“ Christy and I extend our deepest sympathy and prayers to the Ford family on Doc's passing. He was a class act and someone I looked up to during our NSM days together.

Kent Trimble

Kent Trimble, Jefferson City, MO - January 05 at 12:57 PM

MH

“ Doc Ford would greet everyone like an eager puppy dog! He was the epitome of kindness and generosity - always optimistic and upbeat. I am grateful for having known him for well over 40 years, and respecting him as one of the remarkable leaders in our profession of funeral service. God bless Iris and Walter's fine family as they mourn his death while giving thanks for an extraordinary life of love, grace, and service to humanity.

Mark Higgins - January 05 at 12:55 PM

CR

“ Cliff and Kevin, I met your dad in the mid 80's at a NSM meeting and I so enjoyed seeing and visiting with him through the years. He always wanted to know how business was going. He knew my competitor. lol He always had a way of encouraging me in those early years of my career of managing a funeral home. He gave me lots of good advice. BYW I basically put that competitor out of business. He enjoyed knowing that. God Bless all of you and know that he was thought of often through the years. May Peace be with you all.

Charles Rader
Longview, Texas



Charles Rader - January 05 at 12:36 PM

LF

“ To Cliff and the Ford families:

May God's Perfect Peace be with you all. You have our prayers and deepest sympathies.

Daryl and Linda Farrar



Linda Farrar - January 05 at 09:30 AM

MM

“ *Doc was a super guy who will be missed by all. Knew Doc through the NSM Organization of funeral service. He did it all and he did it right!*
Michael Meierhoffer

Michael Meierhoffer - January 04 at 10:04 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.*



January 04 at 08:54 PM

MF

“ *Michael Uhls and Families planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.*

Michael Uhls and Families - January 04 at 08:54 PM

SO

“ Dear Iris and family, I am so sorry for your loss. Doc, was certainly a great man. God's peace be with you all.....



Susie O'Connell - January 04 at 08:06 PM

KC

“ So sorry for your loss. The community lost a lot of great men this year. Prayers.
Kathy Coffman and Barbara Yallaly

Kathy Coffman - January 04 at 03:03 PM

BS

“ *Bistro Saffron purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.*



Bistro Saffron - January 03 at 08:39 PM

BF

“ *Bruce and Karen Dawson family purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.*



Bruce and Karen Dawson family - January 03 at 03:22 PM

BF

“ Bruce and Karen Dawson family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.

Bruce and Karen Dawson family - January 03 at 03:22 PM

JH

“ To all the members of the Ford family, Walter Joe was an amazing man who helped my family through the tough times. He will be missed.

John Hodges - January 03 at 02:54 PM

BO

“ Bornstein's, Richardson's & Crist's Families purchased the Small Garden Dish for the family of Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.



Bornstein's, Richardson's & Crist's Families - January 03 at 12:24 PM

BO

“ Bornstein's, Richardson's & Crist's Families planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.

Bornstein's, Richardson's & Crist's Families - January 03 at 12:24 PM

RB

“ oDoc was a dear friend for many years to me and also later my husband Dick and I .. So sorry for the loss Ruth Eggimann Braning

ruth braning - January 03 at 11:18 AM

KM

“ Iris, Cliff, Kevin, and family,
My thoughts and prayers are with you at this time. Doc was a wonderful man who had many loving family and friends. I know there are great memories to share . May God’s loving arms continue to surround you all. I’m unable to attend the visitation and services. But, I will be there in spirit. God Bless you all.
Karen Webb McClendon

Karen Webb McClendon - January 02 at 08:39 PM

FL

“ Funeral Directors Life purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.



Funeral Directors Life - January 02 at 09:43 AM



“ Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.



January 02 at 08:56 AM

BP

“ Brad and Lnda Parker planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.

Brad and Lnda Parker - January 02 at 08:56 AM

BP

“ *What a very fine man. His influence will always be with us. He will be missed but no way forgotten.*

Brad Parker

Bradley Ray Parker - January 02 at 07:53 AM

AF

“ *While not officially my uncle "Uncle" Walter was an extended member of the Ford family and always treated me as part of the family. I knew him my whole life and he was always the embodiment of kindness. Always had a hello and a warm hug for me and helped my family throughout all of our hardest times. He will always hold a special place in my heart - many prayers to the entire Ford family.*
~Alicia Ford-Long

Alicia Ford-Long - January 01 at 06:11 PM

SM

“ *Mr Ford was a dear family friend. When you saw him he always immediately knew your name and his face would light up seeming delighted to see you. He and my father played golf in a foursomes for many years. Their banter was heart warming humor. He was there to kindly led us in making funeral plans for both our parents. I pray for loving peace for the family!*
Sina Ann Kaiser Miesner

Sina Ann Mliesner - January 01 at 04:38 PM

YC

“ Your friends at Chick-fil-A purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.



Your friends at Chick-fil-A - January 01 at 03:05 PM

CK

“ He and Iris were wonderful parents. I taught Cliff in elementary school, and they were very much involved, always encouraging and eager to help.

After I moved to the Little Rock vicinity, he helped to arrange my mother's funeral, who was now living with us, with every detail needed to bring her back to Cape for her funeral. Even after several years that I was gone, he knew my name immediately. He was a wonderful man. I lift his family in prayer.

Carolyn Kelley - January 01 at 02:27 PM

DM

“ Cape has lost a good man and community leader. Walter Joe was a great friend over the many years. My memories began in my early years watching him as a Central Tiger playing basketball and baseball for Lou Muegge, through the many years we swapped stories about our unique baseball backgrounds, and most recently his compassion and service involving losses in our family. RIP “Doc,” you were special.

Dale Meier - January 01 at 11:08 AM

RS

“ My condolences to the entire family. May God grant you comfort and peace. I got to know "Doc" through the Liar's Club. He always had a kind word, and a smile.

ROBERT STORCK - January 01 at 10:28 AM

DE

“ My sincere sympathy for all Walter Joe's family. I will keep him and all of you in my prayers. God's blessings to all of you.

Donna Essner - January 01 at 09:15 AM

JG

“ Walter Joe, a truly wonderful, caring man. My condolences to the Ford family and especially Iris, Walter Joe's partner for life. Walter Joe helped me through many family deaths, always with empathy and professionalism. May Walter Joe and his family be blessed.
Judy Bullock Graetz.

Judy Graetz - January 01 at 08:58 AM

JP

Prayers for the Ford family. They are all very thoughtful, caring and compassionate people. I have experienced thoughtfulness and kindness over the past years especially from Walter Joe and Jerry. May God surround them with love and peace during this time.
Judy Piper.

Judy Piper - January 01 at 10:29 AM

LS

“ Most sincere condolences to Doc's family. He was always such a welcoming person to be around.
Lyn and Ford Stoecker

Lyn Stoecker - December 31, 2025 at 09:51 PM

SP

“ To Iris, Cliff, Kevin & families: we are saddened to learn of Docs passing. He (and Iris) were great, life long friends of our parents, John & Barbara. He was a great personal friend to me in my time in the cape / Jackson community, especially in Rotary. And he, as well as all of you, were there for us for the family member funerals, especially for our mom & dad. Our deepest sympathies to all of you. What a great man!

Steve Popp
Betsy Popp Schultz

Steve Popp - December 31, 2025 at 06:13 PM

JS

“ Justin Scapino lit a candle in memory of
Walter Joe "Doc" Ford



Justin Scapino - December 31, 2025 at 03:16 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of
Walter Joe "Doc" Ford.



December 31, 2025 at 02:53 PM