

Jack Edwards

The first memory I have of Jack is when we were both very young. I may have only been five or so. Since our parents, Cara , Gerald, Kip and Marty, were friends, I guess they'd gotten together for some event at Jack's home on Denham Road and decided to bring us kids along. The girls may have run off with Robin, but Jack and I and maybe Jamie went to see Jack's baseball card collection. I don't know if I'd ever seen anyone so passionate about anything before in my young life.

The next time I remember Jack was meeting up with him at counselor training maybe in 1971 at Camp Piomingo. It was a great summer and there were many good summers that followed. At one point I was "dating" Leslie Smith who spoke so eloquently afterwards at Jack's funeral. As she noted, she wasn't really looking for a close relationship at that point in her life. I was fifteen, maybe she was 17, a bit out of my league. Jack caught her attention and I liked Jack so much I couldn't be resentful when they struck up what, as I learned at the funeral, was also just a very close friendship.

Another favorite memory I have of Jack at camp was the annual softball rivalry against the Otter Creek Park staff. Jack was our ringer. I know very little about sports and baseball/softball in general, but Jack had it all under control. He'd coach us and let us know where the play would be and what to look out for. He taught us how to trash talk and say "hummmmm baby" and what a donnybrook was. I can't remember if we won or lost, but I know we had a great time. Hot summer days, no air conditioning and watermelon after the games. Everyone should be so lucky to have a place and memories like Camp Piomingo.

While Jack had many responsibilities at camp, I associate him most with archery and working with the little guys (7 to 10 year olds) in Shawnee. While many counselors avoided the added responsibilities of homesickness and more frequent bed wettings, Jack liked them best and year after year volunteered to work in Shawnee.

Then came our young adulthood. Seems Jack liked the great white north and stayed for a bit after college working in a bookstore up there near Macalester. But fortunately we kept in touch through periodic camp reunions and get togethers around town. I moved to New York for many years, ultimately met Diane O'Callaghan of Louisville and a year later, 1986, came home to get married.

Our wedding was at St. Martin's and then the reception was at my in-laws home on Valley Road just off Eastern Parkway. It was a blur most of the evening, saying hello to everyone, adult friends of our parents, etc. But then the older crowd faded away and left just the young folks, again largely made up of camp alums and close college friends. Jack was there and became the MC. Sven and Oley jokes dominated until literally 4:30 in the morning. I'm biased but many friends say it was the best wedding ever and Jack was central to making it so. After we went to bed, Jack took up host duty and drove around Louisville the rest of the night maybe with Clay

Ballantine, Boyce Greer, Marcia Ferdun and Karen Hand (bridesmaids) with stops on the Clark Bridge and the Seneca golf course. Then he took Marcia to the airport for a 7 a.m. flight back to her home.

At some point probably not too long after, or maybe before, we went together to Churchill Downs, likely for Oaks. Leslie Friesen was Jack's date. I didn't remember her but just a couple of months ago, I ran into her through a client and she reminded me of that day. Jack tried to teach us all how to read the racing form and was very patient. I was totally overwhelmed by the depth of statistics required to make as informed a bet as Jack did. He won big and I couldn't understand why he didn't just make a living doing that, but I imagine he wanted to make his mark doing something more meaningful. From that day on, I knew I was way outclassed by serious bettors like Jack and so have contented myself to just bet my two dollars on the horse with the worst odds and a great name...

Time flies and in May of some recent year, Jack showed up at Scott Newsome's Derby Eve party with a date, Karen Buckingham. We were all very happy for him. She fit right in and seemed perfect for Jack. Either that year or the next, we had a big camp crew at the party and Jack helped us close out the evening with a moving rendition of "Piomingo Moon" right on Scott's front porch steps for all the neighbors to enjoy. It was beautiful.

Then about a year ago, probably in May of 2009, Jack ran into my sister Cammie at a local wine shop. They talked and I think she told him I was now a realtor. A few weeks later he called and asked if I could help him buy a condo. I was thrilled. We went at it pretty seriously for several weeks, and found what seemed like a great condo. We made an offer. They made a counter offer. We countered. Jack began to put two and two together and noticed the seller seemed to have a need to control the deal and not in a good way. Jack walked. I knew it was the right thing to do. After that, Jack decided the condo market just wasn't for him. He said we'd put it all on hold and he'd look again maybe in a year. But, by the end of the summer, he'd changed his mind and wanted now to look at houses. He ended up being my very first client. Life couldn't have been better.

I got a call from my friend, Scott Newsome, on a Tuesday afternoon saying Jack had passed away. I was stunned. Then Mark called me later that night to fill me in. A very sad time.

Most mornings I take a walk in Cherokee Park. It is especially important to me when times are hard. It gives me a chance to clear my mind and often takes me back to the many great days I've spent in the woods at camp and elsewhere. Shortly after my dad passed away I headed out to the park and, for the first time ever, saw a deer that had come out of the park and was headed up Willow Avenue. We both paused for a moment and exchanged glances. The deer calmly changed course and headed off behind a neighbor's house.

I didn't see another deer until three years later (this February). One morning early, I saw two deer running off along the creek below Hogan's Fountain. It was the third anniversary to the day of my Dad's death.

The day after getting the news about Jack, I was in the park early again and spotted a deer calmly grazing at the bottom of Dog Hill. He watched me for a while and I smiled. Then he turned and walked into the woods. Three days later, going to Jack's funeral, a red fox came out of nowhere to cross Bardstown Road right in front of me. Never in my life have I seen a fox anywhere in Louisville. I can only wonder.

I began a tradition with Jack and gave him an American flag. The mother of a good friend of mine had given us one when we bought our house and I thought this was really nice and resolved to give one to each of my clients. He right away was reluctant. I said, "I know, the Republicans think they own the flag, but really, it is for all of us." He was unconvinced and noted that he already had a small American flag the previous owner had left in the yard. I said okay. Keep it anyway and find a good use for it. He agreed. After he passed away, I drove by his house one day. The small American flag was still flying in his yard. A man of his word.

I loved Jack.

Pete Kirven
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