



# Jack Mitchell

## Life Story

Jack Mitchell knew how to enjoy life, and each day he shared his happiness and good spirits with his many friends and family. A jokester at heart, Jack had a sense of humor that could break even the firmest of frowns. He was the happiest when he was with his family, and in their company a familiar smile always sat upon his lips.

With a victorious end to the Great War, the 1920's emerged as a decade of economic prosperity and industrial growth. Throughout the country, people piled into dance halls and celebrated their good fortune to the rhythm of a new music called jazz. In Kalamazoo Michigan, Lester and Rhea (Roberts) Mitchell discovered an additional reason to celebrate. They were expecting their fourth child, and on November 27, 1924 they welcomed their son Jack Clare into their home.

The youngest of four children, Jack was the brother of Emerson, Helen, and Robert. A few days after his birth, Jack's mother died from complications due to the pregnancy. Since his father needed to work to provide for the family, Jack was sent to Paw Paw where he was raised by his grandparents in their home on Niles Street. Although he missed the regular company of his siblings, Jack enjoyed his childhood in Paw Paw. He was raised in a strict, traditional environment and enjoyed playing football in school and attending Boy Scouts; Tiny Irons was his Scout Master. Like his grandparents, Jack was very musical, and during his childhood he taught himself how to play the piano, saxophone, and clarinet by ear.

Although Jack was an intelligent student, he decided to quit school after the eleventh grade to join the working world and help with family finances. Eventually he joined the Army and served in the Second World War. Although he was discharged by 1946, he remained in the Reserves and was recalled to service again in 1951 during the Korean Conflict. Jack was recently called again to serve in Desert Storm, but at sixty-seven years of age he could only laugh over the proposition. He served his country for a total of nine years with the U.S. Army, and remained a proud patriot throughout his life. In the words of his son Jamie, Jack was one of the "Iron Men who survived the Great Depression only to become a hero in World War II."

In the year 1946 Jack met a beautiful young woman by the name of Jacquelyn Roberts. He was hanging out at Trails End on Eagle Lake when he first said hello to her. They quickly fell in love, and after a two year courtship they were married by the Justice of the Peace on April 19, 1948. With the company of their good friends, the newlyweds honeymooned in Chicago where they enjoyed a great time at Club Tealise.

Jack and Jackie were blessed with four children, Joel, Jamison, Jeffrey, and Jay. While Jackie stayed at home to attend to the children, Jack went to work as a mechanic for Art Post in Kalamazoo. He later worked as a truck driver for both Industry By Product and M & M Honda. Jack loved to work, and he put off his retirement for as

long as possible. He finally stopped working in his early seventies, when his health forced him to.

Though he had grown up in a very strict household, Jack was a relaxed father who led his children by example. When Jamison dropped out of high school, for instance, Jack was not angry. Instead of arguing, he decided that he would go back to school and get his diploma. "After all," he said to Jamison, "how can I ask you to finish if I don't have my degree?" Jamison and his siblings agree that their father was always more like a best friend. Jack was always available to provide sound advice and good direction. He let you know when you did something wrong, but he never held your mistakes over you.

Among his friends and family, Jack earned a reputation as a "jack" of all trades. He was incredibly handy around the house, and he was always willing to lend a helping hand whenever he could. On one occasion, his neighbor Guy was working on his home at 2:00 in the morning and producing quite the racket. Jack awoke because of the noise, but he wasn't angry; he simply put on his work clothes and went next door to help out. And his help was needed! Guy had made a few crucial mistakes, which Jack corrected for him as the midnight hour pushed toward sunrise.

Jack pursued many hobbies throughout his lifetime. In 1946 he earned his pilot's license, and he continued to fly as recently as four years ago. With his oxygen tank at his side, Jack flew from Kalamazoo to Dowagiac with his nephew, using only ground navigation to find his way! At home Jack enjoyed model airplanes, oil painting, and cooking-everyday he made himself a breakfast of eggs, bacon, sausage, and potatoes with onions. He enjoyed watching cooking shows, and was a vocal proponent of RONCO cooking ware. As a child of the Great Depression, Jack learned that everything has a use, and in his adult years he became a notorious pack-rat, a collector of everything. An avid reader, Jack particularly enjoyed the science fiction genre; his favorite authors were Edgar Rice Burrows and Arthur C. Clark. He loved jazz music, and you could often hear the likes of Duke Ellington, Glen Miller, and Cab Calloway thumping through his stereo.

Although Jack had many hobbies, he had the most fun when he was being a jokester. Jack loved to smile, and he knew how to make others smile too. Even when he was very sick, he continued to crack jokes to his nurses and doctors. For the most part, Jack's beloved family was the target of his humor and practical jokes. Once, when his granddaughter Jackie was canning tomatoes, he instructed her to be sure to leave all the seeds in the tomatoes; "This is very crucial for the canning process," he explained with grave seriousness. But it was an impossible task, as Jackie quickly discovered, and she was very upset by the time her aunt entered upon the scene. They later found Jack in a nearby room, where he'd been chuckling all the while.

Jack touched many hearts throughout his lifetime, and among the many people who loved him, he will be greatly missed and frequently remembered.

Jack died December 5, 2005 at Battle Creek Health Care Systems. Learn more about Jack, view his Life Story film, and visit with family and friends Monday from 1:00-2:00 PM at the Betzler & Thompson Life Story Funeral Homes, M-40 South of I-94, Paw Paw, 657-3870, where a Celebration of Life Service will be held at 2:00 PM. Interment Hill Cemetery in Lawrence. Jack was preceded in by a brother Emerson and a sister Helen, a daughter-in-law Laverne Mitchell. He is survived by his wife Jacquelyn, four sons, Joel Mitchell and Eunice of Hartford, Jamison (Rose) Mitchell, Jeffery (Vicki) Mitchell and Jay (Terri) all of Paw Paw, a brother Robert Mitchell of Kalamazoo, 10 grandchildren, 13 great grandchildren and several nieces and nephews. Please visit Jack's personal memory page at [www.lifestorynet.com](http://www.lifestorynet.com), where you can archive a memory, order flowers, or make a memorial contribution to the Mitchell Family.