



Jeanne Higginbotham

June 8, 1917 - March 5, 2010

Jeanne Kay Higginbotham, widow of songwriter Mack Kay Higginbotham, died Friday night, March 5, at Garden Villa in Bloomington. She was 92. A resident of Bloomington since 1978, she was born Jeanne Gordon Stephens on June 8, 1917 in Anderson, Indiana, the daughter of Guy Don and Lola (Gordon) Stephens. She was raised in the Midwest and Southwest before moving to New York City following the Depression. Through her family she met Mack, who had moved from Indiana to pursue a career in songwriting. They married in 1940. Following the war, in which she served in the USO, the couple remained in New York City. Jeanne helped her husband pursue his songwriting, and they raised one daughter. During these years, she was also employed as a secretary at a variety of businesses, including the Gene Goodman Music Publishing Company and the New York Mets. An accomplished singer, she was a member of the Queens Oratorio Society and the Henry Street Settlement Chorus. Following her husband's retirement, Jeanne and Mack moved to Bloomington, where both became active in the community. Jeanne joined the Sweet Adelines singing group, which she served as president for nine years. During that time the group was chartered and sang at numerous area functions. She also volunteered at Bloomington Hospital, at WTIU, and at the Area 10 Agency on Aging. After her husband's death, she established the first endowed fund specifically for jazz at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and was involved in encouraging young people in their study of jazz composition and arrangement. She was a

life-long Methodist and a member of the University Baptist Church. Jeanne's ancestors on both sides were pioneers in Indiana and she was known as the family historian, keeping an extensive collection of old pictures, clippings, and family letters. She loved to read, make jewelry, and, above all, be with people. Everyone she met became a friend. Due to arthritis, she entered a complete care facility five and a half years ago. For many people this would have been the end of the story. But Jeanne continued her active social life to the very end. As a tribute to her upbeat nature and outgoing personality, her extended family and many friends, including some of the students who had won the jazz fellowship years ago, stayed in frequent contact with her – often traveling long distances to see her. She also made many new friends at Garden Villa among the residents, residents' families, and staff. Survivors include her daughter and son-in-law, Linda Higginbotham and Brad Leftwich of Bloomington; one grandson, Mayura Natha Swami (Seth Higginkern) of Thiruvannamalai, India; and numerous nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her husband, three sisters, one brother, and one granddaughter. Jeanne's family will receive friends from 5-6 p.m. and a memorial service will follow from 6-7 p.m. Friday, March 12 at Allen Funeral Home, 4155 S.Old State Rd. 37, Bloomington, IN. Memorial contributions may be made to the Mack H. Kay Scholarship for Excellence in Jazz Composition through the Indiana University Foundation, P.O. Box 500, Bloomington, IN 47405. Online condolences and memories may be shared at www.allenfuneralhome.org.

Tribute Wall

JA

“ My favorite aunt! I shall miss her so much. I instinctively smiled whenever her name was mentioned. She made everyone feel good when in her presence. I have wonderful pictures from our last visit in June 2009. I would like to send them to you, Linda, but have no address. My life has been enriched by knowing your mother. My thoughts and prayers are with you. I know how much I miss my mother so my heart goes out to you. With love, your cousin.

Jan Garmong - October 26, 2015 at 04:33 PM

JA

“ My favorite aunt! I shall miss her so much. I instinctively smiled whenever her name was mentioned. She made everyone feel good when they were with her. I have wonderful pictures from our last visit. I would like to send them to Linda but have no address.

Jan Garmong - October 26, 2015 at 04:33 PM

DI

“ Dear Linda,
You are in my thoughts and prayers. I have been thinking of you and Aunt Jeanne all week. Her attitude toward life really seemed positive and kind. She had a big heart that I'm glad had room enough for me and my family in it! She had a lot of wit. When I gave her the hat that said "91 and having fun", I told her she would only have one year to wear it. She quickly said "Oh, no, I'll wear this when I'm 94 and they'll think I'm only 91!" She was friendly, accepting, informative, intelligent, and in my humble opinion, very cool. She will be missed. Thank you God for Aunt Jeanne, Aunt Annabel, Aunt Judy, Aunt Donna, and my Dad, Don. Super siblings, super missed.

Diane Raboin - October 26, 2015 at 04:33 PM

JW

“ Dear Linda ~ Jeanne was the first volunteer at WTIU and she was the magnet that continued to attract others for many years. She along with the others provided sound advise as our son became a teenager. What patience, good humor and wonderful tempered parenting suggestions she made. I will always cherish the lunch and coffee chats she and I had after her mobility became more limited. Although her travels became limited she had an amazing way of staying in touch with friends and current events. Jeanne had an infectious smile and a joy of life. What a super model for living your mother was for those she knew. I miss her and I know you will miss her more. May she rest in peace.

Judy Witt - October 26, 2015 at 04:33 PM

BA

“ Dear Linda, I am writing this with such heartfelt memories of your MOM She was a second mother to me. She was the one to introduce me to the wonderful world of music and appreciation of the arts Growing up across the street from you was the best part. Your mom always had whatever we needed to put on our "plays" under the clothesline tent that we made in the backyard. Plus, I will never forget the trunk of costumes she had. Producing all our musical numbers in girl scouts, camping, performing at the world's fair etc. Your Mom always tried to encourage me to sing, I can't sing a note but she always made me feel like I could. I don't have enough space to write all the great memories I have of your mom. Jeanne, was one of the grand dames. She will live in my heart forever. Love, Barbara

Barbara LeDuc - October 26, 2015 at 04:33 PM

SU

“ Dear Linda, I am glad I got to see Aunt Jeanne for her 90th birthday party. It was a wonderful time for all. I will never forget the times growing up when we all got together. The tears, the laughing, the singing. Ours was the happiest family I know. I miss my Dad so I know how much you will miss your Mother. I have never known 4 sisters and 1 brother closer than they were. Incredible family. I am so proud to be a part of it. My sympathy to all who knew Aunt Jeanne. Love your cousin, Sue

Sue King - October 26, 2015 at 04:33 PM

GW

“ Dear Linda,

I first visited your mother after I became a deacon at University Baptist Church. Our common theme was jewelry-making. I adored visiting with her and seeing her excited over my projects and her projects and books about beads. I saw her just before Christmas and planned to make it back, but I didn't. I'm so sad that I didn't get to see her again. I really cherished her.

Gwenette

Gwenette Gaddis - October 26, 2015 at 04:33 PM

EM

“ Dear Linda: I shall treasure the memories of many shared joyous times over so many years with your beautiful mother as I still treasure those of your Dad Mack. They became so much a part of my life from the mid-fifties when I first met them to the present. It was always such joy to call Jeanne on the phone when we were no longer living nearby--I always told her that just the sound of her voice brought joy to my heart no matter the circumstances. I know what a loss this is to you. She brought so much joy to all she met. I wish I could be at the service, but my prayers and thoughts will be with those who are there.
Love Evelyn

Evelyn Marie Plonis - October 26, 2015 at 04:33 PM