

## *Curtis Henry Acker*

We are gathered this afternoon to bear witness to our faith in the resurrection, the resurrection of all who are buried in Jesus Christ the Lord, and the resurrection of Curtis Henry Acker. Curt died on Tuesday (April 27) after a two year course of pulmonary fibrosis. He was 81.

Curt was born June 6, 1928, in Allentown, PA, the only child of Alma Catherine Meitzler and Harry Llewellyn Acker. His father was a plumber and his mother a silk-worker. During his early years Curt spent many hours with his Meitzler grandparents and his mother's two sisters, Aunt Lillian and Aunt Helen.

While staying with his grandparents, Curt often heard music lessons being given by their next door neighbor, John Meyers. When he was about eight years old he was given a cornet and began taking lessons with Mr. Meyers, for which his parents paid \$.50 a lesson. Within a year he joined the New Juvenile Boys Band, a group that rehearsed and performed regularly and professionally. The boys received \$.10/ week for expenses and \$.50 for a concert. As Curt grew up he successively joined the junior high and high school bands.

While still in high school Curt was invited to join the Allentown Band – America's oldest civilian concert band, having been formed in 1828. His childhood cornet teacher's son, Bert Meyers, was the director – and Curt's teacher as well. The band was a union band, so the young Curt got musician union card. The band was in high demand and played several concerts a week.

Curt graduated from Allentown High School in 1946 and enrolled in Mansfield State Teachers College in Pennsylvania. With the school being crowded by returning GIs, Curt offered to play French horn. The band and orchestra director soon heard of Curt's ability on the cornet, however, and invited him to return to his primary instrument. By his sophomore year he was section leader.

During his college years Curt excelled as a trumpet performer. He was a member of the first All-State Collegiate Band and Orchestra. He spent his summers at Chautauqua, NY, where he studied trumpet, played in the student symphony, took courses for graduate credit – and worked as a soda jerk in the refectory.

It was at Mansfield that that Curt met Ernestine Sophia Louise Marvin. Curt was President of the music honorary fraternity and Lou was President of the music honorary sorority. Lou's relationship with her longtime boyfriend was interrupted when Curt invited her to a post Christmas inter-fraternity dance in 1949. The two remained in touch after they graduated in 1950. Lou took a teaching position near West Point, NY. Curt accepted a position in Northport, on Long Island – but then he received an invitation he couldn't refuse from Uncle Sam to join the US Army. So Curt's position at Northport was put on hold while he served with the band training unit at Fort Dix, NJ. After a year teaching in NY, Lou took a position in Glenolden, PA, a school closer to a large city, closer to her older sister, and coincidentally, closer to Fort Dix, NJ.

Curt and Lou re-established their relationship. They married on August 16, 1952, in the same church and with the same presiding minister who had married Lou's parents. That was seven weeks before Curt's discharge from the Army. Lou filled in for Curt in the position Northport was holding for him.

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Lou and Curt settled into Northport, where they lived for 46 years. Curt taught in the school system for thirty three years. Although he taught at all levels, he enjoyed teaching middle schoolers the most, developing students who already had some ability into students prepared to join the high school ensembles. He also served in positions of leadership in Suffolk County, at the state level, and served as an adjudicator for the New York State School Music Association. In retirement he gave private lessons.

A son, Todd, was born in 1953, followed by a daughter, Elizabeth, in 1956. Despite repeated offers of teaching positions from the public schools, Lou preferred to remain at home with their children during their tender years. Eventually she accepted part-time positions, before taking a fulltime position, which she held until 1986. In the summer of 1982, Curt and Lou received an enrichment grant from the Northport School district to attend an Orff-Kodaly music pedagogy conference in Vienna, Austria, and Budepest, Hungary. As you can imagine, the two musicians had a fantastic summer and enjoyed a most memorable experience!

Curt and Lou enjoyed traveling, and made several other memorable trips to Europe. Two cross country camping trips in the mid 1960's with their children were also treasured family experiences.

Curt and Lou together enjoyed the beach, especially Sanibel Island, Florida, and the winter home made there in their retirement years. Curt also was a serious organic vegetable and ornamental flower gardener. Above all, Curt loved to sail. Living in *Northport* made sailing both doable and convenient. Curt and his children, and then his grandchildren spent many hours out on the water. Sailing suited his temperament – in touch with nature, responding to the wind. Todd Acker observes sailing also was an expression of Curt's profound patience – unlike most sailors, he was perfectly satisfied to be adrift in becalmed seas.

Lou was first diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 1995. During the long, challenging, and painful progression of her disease, Curt's deeper character was displayed. His patience may have been tested, but out of his deep love for Lou he cared for her freely and gently.

Curt was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran Church, married a Baptist, and found a spiritual home in the Presbyterian Church: First the Northport Presbyterian Church for 46 years, where he was ordained a deacon, and then here at Bon Air Presbyterian. Curt and Lou were anchors of both of these church's choirs. As Lou's Alzheimer's progressed, Lou had to leave the choir here at Bon Air, but Curt continued to be a mainstay in the bass section. Curt retired from the choir with great reluctance just this last December, as his own progressive illness robbed him of too much oxygen to permit him to sing.

Curt Acker was preceded in death by Lou, his beloved wife 56 years; one son, Todd and daughter-in-law, Kathy, one daughter, Elizabeth, of Los Angeles, CA; two grandchildren, Rebecca Mohr of Arlington, VA and Daniel of Danville, VA; by other extended family and a host of colleagues, former students, and friends.

R. Charles Grant  
Bon Air Presbyterian Church  
Richmond, Virginia  
May 1, 2010

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Curt and Lou Acker were two musicians who made all sorts of beautiful music together. Curt was proud of Lou's compositions and loved them almost as much as he loved her. At Lou's memorial service in 2008 we enjoyed a mini concert of five of Lou's compositions. As interpreted by pianist Maggie Ford, we share them with you now as expressions of the life and love Curt and Lou Acker shared together.