

Teacher Leaves A Lasting Impression On His Students

Arthur H. Jackson III (Teacher, Musician and My Father)

By Mark Jackson - I received a very touching letter from one of my father's former music students on February 22, 2010. My father passed away in 1968 and only taught music for 8 years but it seems that he left a lasting impression. My father's name was Arthur H. Jackson III. He graduated from Odessa High School in Odessa, New York in 1956 and went on to attend Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York. He taught music at Windham-Ashland-Jewett High School in Windham, New York and also at Dryden High School in Dryden, New York. My mother as well as other people that were touched by my father said that he was a perfectionist and a dedicated teacher. Sadly he passed away on August 17, 1968 at the young age of 29 when I was only four years old. It means the world to me that a person remembers the impact that my father had on them 45 years ago and after all these years has found me to let me know. It seems my father left a lasting impression with his former students and specifically a student named Don Zegel...

“There have been hundreds of times over the years that I've wished I could call Mr. Jackson and share the experiences of the day. The mountain top was a great place to grow up. However, for all its beauty and charm, especially when I was growing up, it was very much removed from the world. I had a passion for music and playing the trombone, but didn't know what it was about. Mr. Jackson arrived when I was in 8th grade. It was his first job out of Ithaca College. He immediately started giving. He showed me jazz, told me about symphony orchestras, gave me recordings, told me how the business and the art worked and took me on as a private student. He showed my friends and me what was going on outside the mountain top towns. Several times he loaded us into his car and took us to NYC to see the Yanks or the Mets. The big thing in jazz back then was The Dave Brubeck Quartet. More than once he took some of us to Albany when that group was appearing on tour.

Mr. Jackson showed me how to make a jump shot, throw a curve ball, and get over a broken heart. He took me with him to his Men's bible study group. If it had not been for him I probably would not have gotten off the mountain. He helped me get into Ithaca College. Even drove me out there my Junior year and introduced me to the dean of the music school. After 4 years at IC I went into the US Army Band in Washington DC. I stayed in DC as a professional musician and instructor for a few years and then auditioned for what is now The Florida Orchestra. Thanks to Mr. Jackson I have participated in military functions with heads of state and world leaders, performed on stages with the world's greatest musicians, and realized a dream that would seem out of the question for a kid growing up in a small country town in the 60s.

Unfortunately, I was a teenage kid when he was doing all of this for me and I did not have the emotional maturity to see the gift I was receiving. Years later, after he had passed, I realized what a monumental part he played in my life. Never got to thank him. I am very fortunate to have made contact with you because now I am able to say what needed to be said all of these years. I am sure your mother would remember me. Please share this with her and others in your family.” **Don Zegel**

I wanted to share this letter about my father with you so you can see how a teacher can affect a student's life...